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A GUIDE TO THE EPISTLES OF ST. PAUL

A Guide to the Epistles of Saint Paul

BY

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PREFATORY NOTE

THIS book is not a Life of St. Paul, but a guide to the study of his letters; it will therefore be found to contain no biographical matter beyond what is necessary for that study. It is written in the hope that it may be a help to people who wish to read St. Paul's own writings, and to read them with understanding.

The kind of reader whom the author has in mind is one who is prepared to read whole Epistles through, in English or Greek, to utilize such help as is given here merely as an aid to his own independent study, and to be conscientious in looking up references. If this book is found to be obscure when read with a closed Bible, that will be quite in accord with the author's intention.

St Paul's letters are, in many places, as difficult for us as they were for the writer of the Second Epistle of St. Peter; they do indeed contain "some things that are hard to be understood." They have been interpreted in many different ways. It is doubtful whether there is a single verse upon which all the many commentators are entirely agreed. The summaries which are given here have been constructed, for simplicity's sake, on an arbitrary plan; the author has adopted those views which seem to him to be on the whole the most probable, and

has not often paused to discuss the grounds on which they are based. The reader should therefore remember that he is here presented with nothing more than a working basis for his own study, a study which will very possibly enable him to correct that basis in detail, and to see more clearly into the meaning of the text than the author has done. If he finds that the hard places have been made unduly easy, he is asked to attribute this to the author's desire to present a manageable *conspectus* of a different group of writings, rather than to any intention of minimizing or ignoring their difficulties.

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CHAPTER I

SAINT PAUL AND HIS LETTERS

IN the ancient world there were two men about whom such records have been left that a modern reader can feel that he really knows them. Fortunately they were both supremely well worth knowing: they were Paul and Socrates. We know about Socrates from three sides; Xenophon wrote his Memoirs, Plato, a 'beloved disciple,' made him the chief character in his dialogues, Aristophanes put him on the comic stage in caricature. It is not difficult, then, to form a composite picture out of these materials; the records tell us what Socrates lived and died for, what he looked like, why some people laughed at him; they make it easy to understand how his simple yet subtle way of exposing men's real thoughts, and of leading them, even against their will, to examine the ground of their notions, exposed him to fear and dislike. The outline is completed by all that is recorded of his trial and condemnation, as one who would not acknowledge the gods of the Athenian State, but tried to bring in other alien divinities, and as one who had a bad influence over the younger men: and by the picture which Plato draws in the Phaedo of those last moments in the prison, when the fetters were knocked off, and the relief which the prisoner felt led on to a last discussion, first of pleasure and pain and then of immortality, till the jailer came in with the cup of poison, and Socrates drank it, and died.

Pagan antiquity, as we call it, affords no other portrait so vivid as this. But the personality of St. Paul is even

more knowable than that of Socrates. Whether it is more lovable is perhaps open to discussion; Paul's life was so adventurous and so full of conflict, his temperament was so many-sided, his emotions were so quick, his whole being so rich in vitality and so full of contrasts, that he laid himself open to criticism at many points; he was a man about whom it must have been difficult to be neutral, and in fact he did win endless love and a good measure of hatred also. But there is no doubt that we have abundant material for knowing exactly what manner of man he was, material which for the student of character is of the best possible kind. It is two-fold; part of it is supplied by the latter part of St. Luke's second volume '*ad Theophilum*' but the more important part comes from a source to which Greek literature affords no exact parallel, that is, from what remains of Paul's private and official correspondence.

The Acts of the Apostles, to use the rather misleading title by which St. Luke's second volume is known, is an invaluable source for the history of early Christianity; only those who have tried to make out what we should still know if it had perished can fairly judge how great its value is. And yet it is very fragmentary. St. Paul's travelling companion, who certainly wrote the diary on which the later chapters are based, and very probably wrote the whole book of Acts as we have it, had never read St. Paul's letters, and was ignorant of, or at least did not record, many of his friend's adventures and sufferings. Turn, for instance, to II Corinthians xi, 23-27, and consider how much of St. Paul's own first-hand statements there can be fitted into the framework of the Lucan story; ask yourself what the 'fighting with wild beasts at Ephesus' means, or turn to Galatians ii, and consider how far the story there carries you beyond the narrative of Acts; then you will realize how much more we should have wished the Acts to contain. If only it had gone on for a few more chapters, to tell us about St. Paul's experiences

in Rome, his relations with the imperial household, and his appearance before Nero, so that we could have been quite certain that he was acquitted at his first trial, as II Timothy says he was, and whether he really did travel afterwards 'to the bound of the West,' as Clement of Rome, thirty years after St. Paul's death, says that he did! But the book of Acts is silent, as soon as it has brought the Apostle of the non-Jewish races to the centre of the world.

Further, it is fairly clear that deep as St. Luke's friendship for the Apostle was, there were sides of his character and teaching which he did not wholly understand. Like many strong friendships, this friendship linked together two men of very dissimilar gifts. One of them was a deep thinker as well as a man of action, the other was an observer and a historian. One was a mystic and a man of passionate fervour, the other, we may judge, was more capable of broad views than of deep insight. So it is that St. Luke loves to trace the ordered course of events, and to narrate the spread of the Gospel from Jerusalem outwards into the great world; he notes the men and the institutions which make for its extension or against it; he sees how the Jews harden themselves into opposition, and how evenly Roman justice deals with its apostles and its opponents alike. He has an eye for fine human qualities, for tenderness and affection as well as for steadfastness and courage. But we feel, on a comparison of his story with St. Paul's letters, that there are elements in St. Paul's mind which he can neither appreciate nor reproduce. Thus there are large aspects of St. Paul's conflict with the narrower spirits among the Jewish Christians which we should never have guessed at from the Acts alone; there are many facts which the Acts does not relate because its writer was not deeply interested in the principles which underlay them. He does not tell us what a struggle St. Paul had to maintain his position as an Apostle; he says nothing about the disagreement which separated him for a time even from Peter

and Barnabas; nor does he reveal to us how tragic was the suffering which these experiences brought with them. He is keenly interested in the story of the opening of the Church to the Gentiles, but he is not interested in the deep problems of revelation and history which underlie it all, the problems of law and grace, of predestination and freedom, of the old Israel and the new. One might even doubt, but for one passage in the Acts (xx, 28.), whether St. Paul's doctrine of the Cross ever took full possession of his mind. Jesus Christ as the Saviour of all men and the friend of the outcast was the centre of St. Luke's Gospel, as he was the theme of St. Paul's preaching; the story of the Cross is as central for him as for any of the evangelists; but neither from the Acts nor from the Gospel should we gather that the *meaning* of the Cross, or of the Last Supper, was quite the same for him as for St. Paul.

St. Luke's record of his friend, then, is as far from being complete as he himself was from entirely understanding his friend. But we can supplement it, and at times correct it, and so fill out our own portrait of St. Paul, by making use of the far fuller and more richly human materials which are ready to our hand in St. Paul's own letters. Only one of these is a purely private and personal letter; all the rest are in some degree official; but all of them are perfectly natural, and they help us to know the writer just because they are not meant for that purpose. They are all free from self-consciousness, and entirely 'occasional' in their origin; they arose out of the casual circumstances of a strenuous life, a life spent in mission-preaching and organization, with ceaseless prayer and thought as its background. They are not intended to set forth a system of theology, still less to reveal the writer's personal gifts; yet the writer is a man so sincere, so alive with conviction, that his most casual words are often the most profound; and he is so intense in all that he desires and feels that he cannot help putting something of himself into every line that he writes. Further, though he writes

his letters (or rather, dictates them) as we shall see,[1] with the skill of one who has been trained in the arts of expression, yet he has also that gift which marks the true letter-writer in every age, the gift of making the written word a true mirror of his personality. Sometimes he is forced to put himself in the foreground, for the sake of the cause which he serves: more often he writes without a thought of himself; nevertheless, whatever he writes reveals the man, and the language at his command is so sensitive an instrument that it reveals every shade of his feeling and temper, as well as the whole range of his thought, with all its developments and changes.

We should not find in these letters such a living reflection of their writer if they were not, in the main, real letters, sent to definite persons under actual circumstances, evoked by particular needs, and representing, as a true letter always does, what the writer would have wished to say by word of mouth, if absence had not prevented him from doing so (II Cor. x, 11).

This consideration leads us on to ask what place, if any, the Pauline letters have in the history of literature. For us, as for all Christians for more than seventeen centuries, they form part of the authoritative Bible of the Church. We are accustomed to hearing small sections of them read aloud, and we listen to them as to the words of authority, and words which are valid at all times and for all Christians. Thus it is not easy for us to think of them as letters at all; indeed the word 'epistle' has ceased to be a synonym for the word 'letter'; we have come to regard the 'epistles' as a series of doctrinal pronouncements appended to the Gospel. It is therefore desirable that we should put to ourselves a few questions which may clear our minds from misleading associations; and that we should ask what the motive was which led to the writing of each letter; how the letters were originally sent and used; how they passed into general circulation, how they

[1] Cf. pp. 24-31.

came to form a collection, and to be arranged in their present order; what kind of authority was attributed to them at various times, and what has been the result of their becoming part of the 'New Testament.'

Again, the student of ancient literature knows that the writing and collection of letters of all sorts was a familiar practice in the ancient world; it is natural, therefore, to ask whether our knowledge of non-Christian collections of this kind enables us to criticize, to interpret or to classify the letters of St. Paul. We will try to answer this question first, and to end the chapter by answering some of those mentioned above.

In post-classical times the writing of fictitious letters labelled with the names of great men of the past had an enormous vogue. This sort of fiction was even reduced to a science, and rules were laid down for the correct exercise of 'epistolography' as a recognized literary form. The beginnings of this practice lie far back in the past; soon after the death of Aristotle, for instance, it was thought necessary to publish his genuine letters, because a spurious collection had already appeared. The earliest Christian example about which there is no doubt is the Epistle of Barnabas. In Jewish and Christian Literature the fictitious epistle is by no means unknown; but for real light upon the Pauline letters in general we shall not need to look in this direction.

Fictions apart, there exists a large mass of ancient correspondence which falls roughly into two classes; on the one side there are real letters, and on the other what we should now call 'open letters,' i.e., documents like the 'letters' of Addison and Steele in the *Spectator*, or like most of the 'correspondence' in a modern newspaper, which is intended primarily for the eye of the general public. To these two types the German scholar Deissmann has suggested that we should apply the names 'letter' and 'epistle' respectively and he has urged that our Pauline documents all belong to the former class. I will translate

a paragraph in which he makes his meaning clear.

"The letter is the conversation of persons who are absent from each other; in it, A speaks in the first person to B. Individual and personal, intended solely for the person or persons addressed, it is not meant to be made public: indeed, custom and law protect it from publicity. . . . . The epistle is a form of literary art, like the drama, the epigram or the dialogue: it has nothing in common with the letter except the externals of epistolary form; . . . . Letters are private, the epistle is marketable. It does not go out into the world like the letter on a solitary leaf of papyrus, but it is copied and multiplied by the slaves of the city bookseller; it is meant for sale, reading and discussion in Alexandria, Ephesus, Athens, Rome."[1]

The distinction thus drawn is an important one; but it will be seen, I think, that it needs supplementing. It is not quite enough to decide into which of Deissmann's two classes the Pauline letters fall; we shall also have to take note of some special features which give them a particular place within the class.

Some material for interesting comparisons may be found in the Old Testament and in Jewish apocryphal writings. A true 'letter' was that message of David to Joab which sealed the fate of Uriah the Hittite (II Sam. xi, 15). The 29th chapter of Jeremiah was also sent as a letter, but in form and substance it is more like a fragment of prophecy. Turn, however, to the Apocrypha; there you will find a regular fictitious epistle, which purports to have been sent by Jeremiah to those who were about to be taken as captives to Babylon; and though it may have had a Hebrew original, it clearly betrays the influence of Greek models of composition. The second book of Maccabees, again, is introduced by two fictitious letters,[2] and there are letters in chapter xi which may be genuine, or may

[1] Deissmann, *Paulus*, p. 6f.

[2] It is to be noted that the insertion of these fictions points to the existence of a real habit of correspondence between Jewish local authorities.

have been invented by the historian to illustrate the historical situation. Once again, outside the Apocrypha but widely circulated among Greek-speaking Jews, we find a typical 'epistle,' the "letter of Aristeas," which contains the legend of the Septuagint translation. These examples will suffice to show that if St. Paul had wanted to write 'epistles' he would have found plenty of Jewish precedents ready to his hand.

Outside the Jewish world the 'epistle' was at all times a common literary form, from Aristotle, who wrote the *Protreptikos* in epistolary form, to Plutarch, several of whose treatises have the external form of letters. The Epistles of Horace and Ovid, again, are of this type, and could never be mistaken for real letters. In Latin literature we have some examples which are easy to classify, such as the Moral Epistles of Seneca, which were certainly written for publication; but there are others which stand on the border-line, like the letters of the younger Pliny: these are genuine letters written with a view to their becoming literature some day: we may call them letters or epistles with equal justice. Also the correspondence of Cicero is that of a genuine letter-writer; but though Cicero did not himself collect his papers for publication, he authorized and encouraged others to make them public; he was anxious that they should not go out to the world uncorrected, and made deliberate use of two styles of writing, the letters intended for his friend Atticus' eye having a freedom and a naturalness which he excluded from those intended to reach a wider public.[1]

All these pieces and collections of correspondence, however, have found their way into literature. It is not with these, in the main, that Deissmann would group the letters of St. Paul, but with the very large mass of papyrus letters recovered in recent years from the rubbish-heaps of Upper Egypt. These letters are entirely unliterary; they are

[1] Cic. *ad fam.* xv, 21, 4: *aliter scribimus quod eos solos quibus mittimus, aliter quod multos lecturos putamus.*

the remains, preserved by the dry sand which has covered them for many centuries, of the actual postal communications of a long buried age. The discovery of these documents has led to important results; in particular it has revolutionized our knowledge of that common Greek of the Mediterranean world which is the language of the New Testament. But it has also thrown much light on the form and contents of the Pauline letters.

It shows, for instance, what a letter of that period was actually like. The material was manufactured from the pith (byblus) of the papyrus reed, the surface being prepared by pressing together two layers of strips, a layer of horizontal ones with a vertical layer below. When these had been damped, glued, pressed, and dried, the surface was rubbed smooth, and the paper was ready for use. For a short letter a single sheet would be used, about nine or ten inches by five: for anything longer a roll would be required. Rolls were made by fastening the sides of sheets together, and the dealers used to stock rolls of the length of twenty sheets. Such a roll would have cost about ten shillings at Athens, in 407 B.C., but in Egypt, and generally in St. Paul's time, the price was presumably lower.

The writing was arranged in short columns, and only one side of the papyrus was normally used. A finished letter would be rolled up, tied round, and addressed on the back. Such rolls would not be very durable; so that if St. Paul's letters were often unrolled for reading, the originals would soon need to be replaced by copies.

Every language has its own way of beginning and ending letters. We can see from the papyri that St. Paul followed the common Greek form; he starts with his own name, and the names of those associated with him: then follows the name of the addressee, with a greeting. Then comes a thanksgiving (except in Galatians, where it would have been hypocritical) followed by the body of the letter; at the end there are greetings again and a closing valediction. The common Greek greetings (χαίρειν, πλεῖστα

χαίρειν) and valediction (ἔρρωσο), which are just good wishes for health and well being, are replaced in St. Paul by Christian forms in which the Oriental salutation 'peace' has a place; but it was no innovation when St. Paul so often began his actual letter with a word about prayer. Letters from the papyri are now easily accessible; we will therefore quote only one, which happens to illustrate some of the points of which we have spoken:—

"Serapias to her children Ptolemæus and Apolinaria and Ptolemæus sends best greetings.

"My very earnest prayer is that you may keep well, which I care about more than anything. I offer our worship before the Lord Serapis, praying that I may get you back in good health, and that you may have the success that I pray for. I was so glad to have the letter telling me that you got through safely. Greet Ammonous with his children and wife, and those who love you. Cyrilla greets you, and her daughter Hermia, Hermanubis the nurse, Athenais the governess . . . . and all who are here. Prassis writes this for me at my request, knowing how happy it makes me to have news by post that you are all right.

"I pray that you may be in the best of health."

Serapias, you observe, like St. Paul, dictates her letter. She does not sign it, however, perhaps because she could not write her name. It was St. Paul's way to put his name at least at the end of his letters (II Thess. iii, 17), and in many papyri there are parallels to this, the signature being in a different hand from the body of the letter.

At many points, then, the Pauline letters are closely akin to the ordinary private correspondence of his time. And yet, if we put on one side the purely personal letter to Philemon, we shall find that they all exhibit points of character which distinguish them from the casual business and family communications of the papyri. They are indeed personal, sometimes passionately so, but they are also official; each of them is sent from an "apostle of Jesus Christ" to a local habitation of the Church of God. They

are meant for public reading in a gathering of Christians; they are the voice of the absent preacher who sometimes is thinking of wider circles than the one immediately addressed. Thus in I Cor. i, 2, he includes in his greeting "all those who call upon the name of Jesus Christ" (unless, as is perhaps the case, these words were inserted by the editor who first published the letters as a collection). Some of the letters were from the first intended to be circulated; the Galatian letter is addressed "to the Churches of Galatia"; Colossians is to be sent on to Laodicea, and a letter to Laodicea is to be forwarded to Colossæ for reading there: Ephesians was probably never anything but a 'Catholic epistle.' In reading Romans, too, one feels that St. Paul must have had in mind the probability of its travelling far. In the fulness of its argument and the largeness of its design it comes very near to being an 'epistle'; it is more like the 'epistle to the Hebrews' than the other Pauline letters are; and though it was doubtless meant in the first instance for one Christian community, it reads rather like an appeal '*urbi et orbi*.' Compare it with the handling of the same themes in Galatians; you will then feel how far more personal the whole tone and structure of the latter is. In Galatians "the fire is kindled," and St. Paul writes straight from a heart full of indignation and grief; in Romans he works out, it is clear, many lines of thought that he has been accustomed to follow in mission-preaching; the only passion in the letter is that of the missionary and the believer: the fire still burns, but with a steadier glow.

Let us turn now to one or two of our other questions. We shall have occasion to speak in later chapters of the motive of each letter; but something may now be said of the gathering of the letters into a collection.

The original manuscript was written from dictation on a papyrus roll,[1] in a hand which was presumably nearer to

[1] The 'parchments' mentioned in II Timothy iv, 13, were probably used for rough drafts; a 'tablet' of vellum could be used

that of a trained scribe than were the ' big letters ' formed by the hand of the Apostle, a hand stiffened by manual work (Gal. vi, 11). The dictation must have sometimes been slow, if one may judge by the great care which St. Paul occasionally devoted to structure and arrangement. This care was justified by its results. Everyone felt, even the hostile critics, that the letters were " weighty and strong " (II Cor. x, 10). Once written, the papyrus roll was given to a private messenger ; the imperial post was not available for private correspondence, nor would it have been safe to trust it. When delivered, the letters were meant to be both seen and read, that is, read aloud. Reading aloud was indeed the common way of reading in the ancient world, and silent reading was exceptional, but in this case the reading would take place before the assembled Church. We may conjecture that the reading of the Apostle's letters in an assembly which would otherwise hear no reading but that of the Old Testament Scripture must have lent to those letters peculiar weight. It was in fact the beginning of the process by which the letters themselves became a part of the Scripture.

If from the first some of the letters were destined for circulation, in however limited a circle, we can readily understand how in quite early days they would be copied and sent to neighbouring Churches. Not all of them were so copied. We know of two letters to Corinth, one of which is entirely, and the other partially lost (I Cor. v, 9, II Cor. ii, 4), and the Corinthian Church did not preserve its own letters to St. Paul (I Cor. viii). But perhaps we may measure the importance attached to apostolic letters by the fact that even in St. Paul's lifetime letters forged in his name were in circulation, so that he had to defend himself by drawing attention to his actual signature (II Thess. ii, 2 ; iii, 17).

The beginnings of a local collection may have been made

over and over again for this purpose. Cf. Martial xiv, 7 : *delebis, quoties scripta nouare uoles.*

in Philippi. Clement of Alexandria speaks of St. Paul's correspondence "with the Macedonians"; and in some early quotations the Philippian and Thessalonian letters are confused in a way that suggests that the letters to these Churches were grouped together at an early date. But this can only have been a local anomaly. It is clear that a much larger collection was brought together within a quarter of a century of the death of St. Paul.

The earliest limit for the forming of this collection depends on the date of Acts. We may be sure that it had not been made, nor at least had not travelled far, by the time that Acts was written; the complete independence of the letters shewn in Acts would otherwise be very hard to explain. Let us guess then that the collection is later than 85 A.D. On the other hand it is earlier than the Second Epistle of Peter, which not only shews acquaintance with the collected letters but also alludes to a letter which it is not easy to identify with any of those now extant (II Pet. iii, 15): but as Second Peter is of unknown date, and is probably the latest writing incorporated in the New Testament, it does not help us much at this point. But we have a definite date to go by in the year 144 A.D. At that time Marcion, the founder of the first great schismatic church, who rejected everything connected with Judaism, and regarded St. Paul as the only faithful apostle of the Saviour, took ten of the letters, together with St. Luke's Gospel, all in a mutilated form, and set up these as the Bible of his society. Now whatever else was novel in his procedure, it is, I believe, quite certain that the idea of making a collection of Pauline letters was not an innovation. For if we look further back we find a parallel instance which shews how close was the inter-communication between distant churches, and how keen was the desire of Christians to keep in touch with the writings of those whom they honoured. About 110 A.D., Ignatius, bishop of Antioch in Syria, was taken to Rome for martyrdom. On his way he wrote seven letters to various churches, and to Polycarp,

bishop of Smyrna; and as soon as the Philippian Christians, to whom one of these letters was addressed, learnt of the existence of the other letters, they wrote to Polycarp asking that copies might be sent to them; and so the Ignatian collection came into existence within a very short time of the martyr's death.

But even without this striking parallel, the example of which was often followed in later times, we should be sure from reading the letters of Ignatius and Polycarp themselves that a Pauline collection was in their hands. Polycarp's language is saturated with allusions which could only come from such a collection and he evidently expects that the Philippians to whom he writes will be as familiar with these venerated texts as he himself is; every epistle except I Thessalonians, Titus and Philemon is represented, and that within the space of a few pages. We need only take one step further back, to the letter of Clement of Rome, written about 95 A.D. to the Corinthian Church. Not only does Clement bid the Corinthians turn to the letter which St. Paul wrote, "first to them, in the beginning of the Gospel," but he makes use of phrases which suggest clearly that the Roman Church in his day, like those of Smyrna and Antioch a few years later, was in possession of a Pauline collection practically identical with our own.

Between about 85 and 95 A.D. then, the Pauline letters were collected and began to become the property of the churches. Were they from the beginning arranged in any fixed order? So long as they were written on small papyrus rolls this would not be easy: and the libraries of the Churches must have contained nothing but papyrus for a long time;[1] but a roll long enough to contain St. Luke's Gospel, which was about the normal size for a literary papyrus, would contain any two of the longer epistles, or four or five of the shorter ones. At any rate, Marcion's

[1] As late as the latter half of the fourth century the great library of Pamphilus at Cæsarea consisted of papyrus rolls; two presbyters then took up the task of reproducing it in vellum *codices* or books.

Canon of the Epistles was arranged in an order of his own, beginning with Galatians, the epistle which he considered most important. In the Catholic Church the earliest prevalent order, which is found in a list dating from about 180 A.D. (the Muratorian fragment) and may be much older, begins with Corinthians and ends with Romans. This order does not seem to be based on any principle: it is certainly not the order in which the letters were written; but it groups together those written during St. Paul's captivity in Rome, Philippians, Colossians and Ephesians, and perhaps it was devised in Rome.

The arrangement found in our Bibles dates roughly from about 300 A.D., just the time when the Christian books began to be transferred to *codices* on vellum. This order is no more chronological than the older order was; indeed, it is based simply on the length of the Epistles.[1] The personal letters to Timothy, Titus and Philemon are placed last, and the letters to Churches are arranged merely in order of size. The only exception to this is the placing of Galatians before Ephesians; in Greek (though not in English), Ephesians is slightly the longer of the two. But doubtless when the arrangement was first made, the difference was felt to be too small to justify a disturbance of the old practice which kept Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians together.

We must not imagine that as soon as the letters were gathered together they were treated as Holy Scripture. It was during the second century A.D., that the Church came to rank the apostolic books on a level with, and even above the Old Testament. But the beginnings of this process must have been made very early indeed; it is quite misleading to think of it as a sudden step. The earliest Christian writings outside the New Testament shew that their writers already regarded the apostolic letters

[1] Here is a list of the Epistles measured by the columns which they take up in the Revised Version:—Rom. 20; I Cor. 19⅓; II Cor. 13; Gal. 6⅔; Eph. 6⅓; Phil. 4⅔; Col. 4⅔; I. Thess. 4⅓; II Thess. 2⅓; I Tim. 5⅓; II Tim. 3⅔; Tit. 2; Philem. 1.

as an unique and authoritative source and standard of teaching. It is worth while to consider, in this connection, how the very fact that the letters were collected and circulated must have enhanced their authority. If, let us say, the Church at Antioch possessed and listened to letters originally written to Corinth or Thessalonica, it would not interest itself so much in the local and individual elements in them as in their general teaching; it would handle them as containing truths generally and everywhere applicable. That is to say, in its use of them it would treat them rather as 'epistles' than as letters, and indeed as Catholic epistles, addressed to Christendom in general. It is easy to see how this must have helped on towards the ultimate recognition of the Epistles as Canonical Scripture, that is, as the gift of the Holy Spirit through the Apostle to the whole Church, and as a test and a guarantee of the Church's teaching.

For us the Epistles still stand, together with the Gospel, as a great monument of the apostolic faith; nevertheless, if we wish really to understand them and their writer, we must take our minds back beyond the time when they became part of the Bible, and even beyond the time when they were collected, and read them, if we can, as letters from a living man to living men.

CHAPTER II

SAINT PAUL, HEBREW AND HELLENE

FOUR languages are mentioned by name in the New Testament—Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and the 'Speech of Lycaonia' (Acts xiv, 11). With all of these St. Paul had some contact. The last of them, which he heard in the cries of the crowd at Lystra, was just one of the many local languages which survived, and that not exclusively in country districts, all over the Græco-Roman world. He came across another of these after his shipwreck, at Malta, where the kindly 'barbarians' talked to each other in a Phœnician dialect (Acts xxviii, 2, 4). But wherever he fell in with these 'native' forms of speech they must only have reminded him, as they remind us, how completely the world to which he belonged was overspread by one or two widely diffused languages, one of which was for practical purposes universal.

One of these languages—Latin—need not delay us here. It is true that St. Paul could not travel about the Empire without hearing and seeing a good deal of Latin: Roman officials liked to maintain the dignity of their imperial tongue by using it in documents and inscriptions. There was, for instance, a barrier in the Temple at Jerusalem beyond which Gentiles were forbidden to go, and the inscriptions upon it were carved in Latin as well as in Greek. Naturally also a fair number of Latin loan-words were current in the vernacular language of Palestine. But there is no reason to suppose that St. Paul could write Latin or understand it when spoken. From boyhood, however, he

must have been thoroughly familiar with two languages, Aramaic and Greek. His father was a full citizen of Tarsus —" no mean city " ; there is a tradition that the family came there as deported prisoners after a Roman devastation of their country, from Gischala in Galilee. In any case his parents had been settled there long enough, by the time of St. Paul's birth, to have attained full civic rights. They were Jews by birth and also by conviction : perhaps it was as children of the tribe of Benjamin that they gave their son the name of Saul (I Sam. ix, 1-2). In their home life it is probable that they spoke Aramaic, as Jews in East London speak Yiddish ; this is probably what St. Paul means when he claims to be " a Hebrew of Hebrew birth " (Phil. iii, 5)—he is claiming not merely to be a Jew, but also to be one whose native speech was that of his people.

Aramaic, or Syrian,[1] as it was commonly called, was a Semitic language which had had a very wide currency in the East for some seven centuries ; it was in this tongue that the ministers of Hezekiah asked the Rabshakeh to speak, so that the Hebrew-speaking inhabitants of Jerusalem might not understand what was said (II Kings xviii, 26). By the beginning of our era, and indeed long before, it had become the common speech of the whole of Palestine, east and west of Jordan alike. Even in the Old Testament it is found side by side with Biblical Hebrew ; parts of Daniel and Ezra, and one verse of Jeremiah, are in Aramaic. It was the language of our Lord and His disciples ; and though its dialects differed, so that the speech of a Galilæan would ' bewray ' him in Jerusalem (Matt. xxvi, 73), as that of a Northumbrian would ' bewray ' him even in Carlisle, yet it was as well spoken and understood by the Syro-Phœnician woman, or the woman of Samaria at the well, or the Edomites or Nabatæans, as by the common folk of Jerusalem. The Rabbis, in learned discussions, used a

[1] The name *Syriac* is commonly restricted to the language and literature of the Syrian Church which had its beginning in Edessa late in the second century A.D.

late form of Hebrew, and this learned language was doubtless spoken in the Sanhedrin. Their official attitude to Aramaic was tinged with contempt: those who used it, and knew no learned or biblical Hebrew, they would call "unlearned and ignorant,"[1] Yet in official correspondence with Jewish communities at a distance they would use Aramaic, and this would be the language of the letters which Saul the persecutor carried to Damascus (Acts ix, 2). It was also commonly used in the worship and teaching of the Palestinian Synagogues. When our Lord stood up to read at Nazareth, the roll from which He read was in Biblical Hebrew (Lk. iv, 16): but the reading in Hebrew would be accompanied by a paraphrase in Aramaic—as the Gospel and Epistle are sometimes read from the pulpit in English in Roman Catholic Churches—and the succeeding address to the people would be made in the common tongue.

Aramaic, then, was St. Paul's first language: it was, we may conjecture, the natural language of his prayers; even in a Greek letter, in which he has to translate the word, he speaks of prayer as "crying Abba" (Rom. viii, 15). *Maran atha*, again (the Lord is near) is also Aramaic (I Cor. xvi, 22): perhaps those who first read it in a Greek letter to Corinth understood that it was a special warning from a 'Hebrew' to opponents who prided themselves on their 'Hebraism.' But the most vivid instance of St. Paul's familiarity with Aramaic is the scene on the steps of the temple fortress at Jerusalem (Acts xxi, 40): the people listened to him in dead silence as soon as the first words shewed that he stood before them not as a 'Hellenist' but as a man of their own speech.

Yet while he could address the unlearned in a language that was both his and theirs, he was not 'unlearned' himself. Perhaps the religious fervour of his family was exceptional; it led them, even in their Hellenic home, to remember that their sympathies were entirely with the Pharisees (Acts xxiii, 6), and to send their son Saul to Jerusalem to

[1] ἀγράμματοι καὶ ἰδιῶται, Acts iv, 13.

sit at the feet of the greatest Pharisee of his time, the Rabbi Gamaliel (Acts xxii, 3). Perhaps this was all the more natural because there was a married daughter in Jerusalem already—her son was old enough by A.D. 56 to save his uncle from a conspiracy which endangered his life (Acts xxiii, 16). We shall have to speak later of the effects of Rabbinical training upon the future apostle: the effect to be noted here is that it gave him, of necessity, a mastery of learned and Biblical Hebrew, acquired both through the study of the Law and through the immense labour of learning by heart innumerable Rabbinical decisions, none of which were ever written down.

But if Aramaic was St. Paul's first mother-tongue, and Hebrew came to him as a part of his equipment as a Rabbi, Greek was the true native language of his mind. He must have grown up from childhood with the great mental advantage of being able to speak and write two completely different languages with equal ease. Not only was Greek the only speech to be heard in the streets of Tarsus; it was also the common language of the dispersed Jews throughout the world, and even in the synagogue of Tarsus the Aramaic of Saul's home life was probably never heard.

The universality of Greek, and its place in the life of Judaism, are so important for the study of St. Paul that something more must be said about them; we shall then be better able to form an idea of the degree to which Greek ideas and culture contributed to the moulding of his mind and style.

In St. Paul's day, as we have seen, the Aramaic speech had still a very wide range. There were regions, indeed, where it survived till the coming of Islam. But ever since the time of Alexander the Great (d. 322 B.C.) the Hellenization of the vast area over which his empire spread had been going forward. In the separated kingdoms which divided up his inheritance this process went on with varying degrees of speed and completeness—it was more rapid, for instance, in Asia Minor than in Syria or in Egypt. And

just as Latin did not become the common speech of Gaul till the Roman rule had given place to the Frankish Kings, so it was not till the Seleucid Kings had given place to the Roman Empire that Greek obtained its fullest mastery in Asiatic lands. By St. Paul's time, however, though the local languages had not died out, Greek had become the language of the cities everywhere: in administration, commerce, and literature it had no rival.

Within the narrow circle of Palestinian Judaism the tide of Greek influence had always met with resistance. The Maccabean rising shows this resistance at its height: to the Maccabees the preservation of their language was of vital importance in the interest of Jewish patriotism and religion (II Macc. vii, 8, 21, 27; xii, 37; xv, 29). Yet on the side of language their resistance was vain. In the second Maccabean generation even the representatives of the national cause bore Greek names, such as Jason, Eupolemus, Menelaus: while under the rule of the high-priests, and still more under that of the Herods, the tide of Hellenism flowed with ever-increasing volume. It was checked in the end by political and military disasters. The wars which ended with the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, and with its still more complete destruction in 135, brought a dramatic close to the *rapprochement* between Judaism and Hellenism. But up to A.D. 66, even in Jerusalem, and to a large extent throughout all classes of society in Palestine, Greek was freely spoken. The Rabbis spoke it themselves, and zealous though they were for the honour of Hebrew, the 'sacred language,' they seem to have preferred Greek to the 'unlearned' Aramaic.

But it should be remembered that the Palestinian Jews were now a relatively small minority. There were very large Jewish settlements in Babylon and in Egypt, and considerable colonies of them in every city of the Roman Empire. These Jews of the dispersion, bilingual though some of them may have been, were nearly all 'Hellenists'; here and there, as for instance in Rome and Corinth, a

'synagogue of Hebrews' would be found, i.e., a meeting-house in which the Bible would be read in Hebrew, and the rest of the service in Aramaic, but Judaism of the Dispersion, as a whole, read the Bible, was instructed, and prayed in Greek. Even in Jerusalem there were numbers of Hellenist Jews, who had come back to the Holy City from the Dispersion, and had their own Greek-speaking Synagogues there; while the continual round of festivals, and the necessity of bringing 'tithes and offerings' to the Temple, must have drawn a very large number of Hellenists as pilgrims to Jerusalem from the ends of the earth. Greek-speaking Judaism, before the great breach with Hellenism in A.D. 135, produced a very considerable literature, including the books of the ultra-Greek religious philosopher Philo of Alexandria, the two great historical works of Josephus, and a large number of works passing under assumed names, the object of which was to commend the Jewish race to its Greek neighbours. But its chief possession was the Greek Bible, a version made at various times in the third and second centuries B.C. This translation, which derives the name of 'Septuagint' (lxx) from the well-known legend of its origin, which ascribed it to the miraculous unanimity of seventy independent translators, was the Bible of the numerical majority of Jews for some three centuries. But when it became also the property of the Christian Church, and was freely used in controversy with Jews to establish the truth of Christianity as the fulfilment of prophecy, it lost its position as a sacred book of the Jews. They maintained—and with justice,—that the Hebrew original was the final court of appeal, and when a Greek version was wanted they preferred to use versions like that of Aquila, which did not pretend to be written in real Greek at all, but followed the Hebrew text with slavish accuracy.[1]

It has been well observed that the region of St. Paul's

[1] Thus in Aquila's version the first verse of Genesis was translated thus:—*ἐν κεφαλαίῳ ἔκτισεν ὁ θεὸς σὺν τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ σὺν τὴν γῆν.*

travels is very nearly identical with the region of the olive-tree. Only one short stretch of the route lies outside the Mediterranean olive-bearing zone. But if a map were made shewing the diffusion of the LXX, it would be seen that the whole of the Pauline journeys lie within the zone of the LXX, and that they leave only two large areas of that zone (Egypt and Mesopotamia) untouched. Wherever St. Paul took the Gospel, the Greek Bible had preceded him; the Jews in the Synagogues and the circles of 'God-fearing' Gentile adherents of the Synagogue were all familiar with the Scripture in this form, and with the kind of reasoning from Scripture on which he so largely relied. Thus for the first stage of the mission-preaching, the appeal to the Jewish world, the wide diffusion of the LXX was all-important; while for the second stage, the appeal to non-Jews, it was also of crucial importance that St. Paul was able to shew to Greek hearers, in their own language, the 'living oracles' of the one Holy God, and of His Christ. Gamaliel, we may guess, had very few other pupils who could regard the Greek Bible as equal in inspiration and authority to the Hebrew original: Paul, the child and apostle of the Dispersion, when once he had burst the bonds of Pharisaism, left the Hebrew to the Rabbis of Jerusalem, and based all his appeals on the scriptures of Hellenic Judaism.

But there is another side to this picture. St. Paul's Greek, though it is not 'translation Greek,' is on the whole that of a man whose mind is saturated with reminiscences of the LXX. What did real Greeks think of it? Did it sound very 'Judaic' to them? If so, he must have had a great difficulty in "becoming a Hellene to the Hellenes, that he might gain the Hellenes." Now a great scholar of our day[1] has said that in spite of the profoundly Jewish tone of St. Paul's mind, he wrote Greek which makes him a "classic of Hellenism": in him we have "once more, after a long interval, a man whose Greek is the expression of a vivid inward experience." And in fact it is clear, even

[1] Von Wilamowitz-Mœllendorf.

from the Epistles, which are so full of Biblical Greek, that St. Paul could write when he wished, as a genuine Hellene would write. It is true that the sophisticated Corinthians thought him very provincial—his *logos*, they said, that is, the structure and diction of his utterances, was contemptible (II Cor. x, 10): nor did St. Paul care to refute the charge—if any one cared to think him unliterary in speech,[1] they might do so. But in fact if they did so they were far from being right, and although a knowledge of Greek makes it easier to appreciate this, we can understand something of it from our own Bible; but we must go to the trouble of looking at the letters, to see how in them, together with elements of style that are strongly Jewish, there is the work of a trained student of Greek diction.

It is not easy to sum up in a simple formula the characteristics of St. Paul's style. His letters are written in many moods, and the structure of them varies with the writer's emotion and thought. He becomes "all things to all men"; the close-drawn arguments of Romans ix-xi, the alternations of anger and dialectic in Galatians, the strained emotion of II Corinthians, the quiet moral teaching of Romans xii, the perfect music of I Corinthians xiii—all these, taken together, reveal an astonishing range and variety of utterance. Only when we have convinced ourselves of the width of this range is it possible to believe that letters so different as I Thessalonians, Colossians and Ephesians came from the same hand. At times the writing is abrupt, vehement, concise: at others it is more like the work of a musician extemporizing on a theme; an apparently casual word suggests a new line of thought, and the bye-way is followed and explored, till we feel that we are wandering down a path which has no apparent end. Read, for instance, II Corinthians xi, which was written in a mood of tragic intensity, and as a contrast with this, consider Philippians iii, 1-16, considering how the words "confidence in flesh" lead on by one modulation after

[1] ἰδιώτης τῷ λόγῳ (II Cor. x, 11).

another to a perfect cadence; and then take the opening chapters of Ephesians, and observe how the modulations succeed one another without pause or rest, so that you have to read three whole chapters before you reach a full close. You will then have some idea of what is meant by "variety of style" in St. Paul.

But this variety can be analysed and has some persistent elements. First of all, let us allow for St. Paul's intimate knowledge of the Old Testament, and for signs of kinship between his writing and that of Hebrew poetry. In the Psalter we are familiar with what is called 'parallelism': almost every verse exemplifies it. The second half of a verse will sometimes repeat the sense of the first, or again will echo it with a difference, or confront it with a contrast. Now there are many passages in St. Paul which are just like:

> "The heavens declare the glory of God: and the firmament sheweth his handiwork"—

or

> "So that the sun shall not burn thee by day: neither the moon by night"—

or

> "But the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous: and the way of the ungodly shall perish."

Compare with these verses the following:—

> "For who hath known the mind of the Lord: or who hath been his counsellor?" (Rom. xi, 34.)
>
> "I am debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians: both to wise and foolish." (Rom. i, 14.)
>
> "He that plougheth ought to plough in hope: and he that thresheth, in hope of partaking." (I Cor. ix, 10.)
>
> "He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly: and he that soweth bountifully, bountifully shall he also reap." (II Cor. ix, 6.)
>
> "But I say, walk by the Spirit: and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." (Gal. v, 16.)

These examples will serve to indicate the general principle that the Jewish love of parallel and contrast runs through St. Paul's style as a whole. Most dominant, however, is the note of contrast. St. Paul's mind was built up on contrasts: Christ and Belial, spirit and flesh, faith and work, slavery and freedom, law and grace, life and death, visible and invisible, temporal and eternal—there is no end to them: all his great affirmations are at the same time denials of some opposite, just as the whole of his life in Christ was a denial of the life that he had tried to live without Christ. No wonder then that his writing is fuller of *antithesis* than of any other figure of speech: on one page of the R.V., I find it twenty-eight times (II Cor. iv, v). He is for ever persuading men to think 'not this, but that,' and to do not one thing but another, and naturally so, for the whole of his teaching turns upon the infinite difference between the works of darkness and the armour of light, between friendship to God and enmity to God, between the real 'good news' and all its rivals.

Now it is true that such Biblical books as the Psalms supply St. Paul with some of his forms of diction: but it is also clear that a mere Jew could not have written the Epistles as they stand. They are full of passages which shew, when analysed, the influence of purely Greek training, passages written in a particular manner of Greek prose, a manner which was taught and studied in St. Paul's day in circles with which there is every reason to think that he came into close contact.

Tarsus was always a great centre of Stoic teaching. The Stoics, with their moral seriousness, their detachment, their pantheism which looked so like monotheism, had for a long time exercised a strong influence upon Hellenic Judaism. Indeed there are many points of close kinship between the teaching of Epictetus or Seneca and that of the Old Testament; even the eschatology of later Judaism has its parallel in the Stoic doctrine of a fixed period at the end of which the world will perish by fire, to be renewed again as at the

beginning. Stoical ideas and language therefore found an easy entry into the literature of Greek-speaking Jews—the Jewish *Sibylline Oracles*, for instance, are full of them.

Now the speech of St. Paul on the Areopagus shews us—and in this point there is every reason to think the record of Acts a faithful one—that St. Paul shared the sympathy which Pharisaic Jews had for Stoicism. He quotes the Stoic poets, he speaks of God as a Stoic would speak, God who " is not far from any one of us, for in Him we live and move and have our being." As he divided the Pharisees against the Sadducees at Jerusalem, so he divided the Stoics against the Epicureans at Athens (Acts xxiii, 6ff ; xvii, 26ff). That is to say, he spoke just as a Jew brought up in the Stoic atmosphere of Tarsus would naturally speak.

We need not then be surprised if we find evidence in the Epistles that St. Paul had learned, and learned with real pains, how to write like a Stoic. The Stoics were moral teachers, and in many cases wandering preachers, like St. Paul. Their form of expression, the type of instruction which they gave, was called the *diatribé*. It was popular, brief, direct. The clauses were short, full of contrasts, and carefully arranged : and it was a common device to bring in an imaginary disputant, with whose objections the preacher would deal. There was no attempt, as in Attic prose, to design long periods with balanced subordinate clauses, and yet the structure of the discourse was built up with real art. The points were made with effective simplicity, and driven home at the end of the paragraph. Thus the *diatribé* was just suited to the hearing of ordinary people : and it was the best way, perhaps, in which a popular audience could be taught and convinced.

Now the style of St. Paul is often very like the one which we have just described. It is a style of short clauses, and not of elaborate periods.[1] The best way to see what this means is to take a short Pauline passage, e.g., II Cor. vi,

[1] To use the Greek technical terms, it is a λέξις εἰρομένη, not a λέξις κατεστραμμένη.

14-16, to analyse it, and then to compare it with (e.g.) Hebrews ix, which is strictly 'periodic.' Everywhere in St. Paul we find the imaginary disputant and the rhetorical question: and so far at least there is a strong resemblance between St. Paul and the Stoics. But we are accustomed to treat even the loftiest passages in the Epistles as the fruit of inspired conviction and nothing more; and it is perhaps an unwelcome suggestion that there is any literary art in them. Is there any? The question can only be answered by careful analysis. But a few experiments will help one towards forming an opinion; and if we try the device of writing out passages in *commata*, that is, in short sense-lines, I think it will become clear that there is the highest art in them, the art that conceals itself, the art that has become second nature.[1] The result is just the same whichever level of the Apostle's utterance we follow: he is as real an artist when he is teaching simply as when he is "losing himself in an *o altitudo*"—just as Bach is always a supreme technical master, on whatever level of inspiration his genius happens to be moving. Consider as a first example a fragment from the passage (Rom. xiv, 5-8) in which St. Paul deals with problems of conscience relating to outward observances. May we eat without scruple? Can we rightly 'observe days'? May we judge each other, or is the Lord's judgment all that matters? These are the themes: observe the almost musical balance and rhythm with which they are handled:—

> "Let each man be fully persuaded in his own mind.
> He that keepeth the day: keepeth it unto the Lord:
> and he that eateth; eateth unto the Lord,
> for he giveth God thanks:
> and he that eateth not; unto the Lord he eateth not,
> and giveth God thanks.

[1] St. Augustine noticed this and discussed it in the book *De Doctrina Christiana*. In our own time it has been made the subject of a minute enquiry by the German scholar, Johannes Weiss.

For none of us liveth unto himself:
and none of us dieth unto himself.
For whether we live, we live unto the Lord:
or whether we die, we die unto the Lord;
Whether we live, therefore, or whether we die,
we are the Lord's."

Let us place next a fragment (II Cor. iv, 16-18) in which the antithesis 'outward—inward,' 'decay—renewal,' 'light—heavy,' 'affliction—glory,' 'seen—unseen,' 'temporal—eternal,' are wrought together in similar perfection:—

"Wherefore we faint not;
but though our outward man is decaying:
yet our inward man is renewed day by day.
For our light affliction which is for the moment
worketh increasingly for us an eternal weight of glory;
While we look not at things seen but at things unseen:
for the things that are seen are temporal,
but the things that are unseen are eternal."

Every page, almost, of the Epistles supplies examples of this care for structure. It is well worth while to test it for oneself by writing out some of the most memorable sections.[1] We can only add here one vividly illustrative passage of argument (Rom. ii, 17-29), in which parallelism and the rhetorical question and antithesis are all woven together:—

(*a*) "But if thou art called a Jew—
and restest upon the law—
and gloriest in God—
and knowest his will—
and (ap)provest the things that are excellent,—
being instructed out of the law,
and trustest that thou art a guide of the blind
a light of them in darkness
a corrector of the foolish
a teacher of babes
having in the law the form of knowledge and of truth;

[1] e.g., Rom. viii, 31-39; xii. I Cor. ix, 19-22; xiii; xv, 35-49. II Cor. vi, 1-10; xi, 16-31. Gal. v, 16-24. Phil. iii, 1-16.

(*b*) thou therefore that teachest another:
teachest thou not thyself?
thou that preachest a man should not steal:
dost thou steal?
thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery:
dost thou commit adultery?
thou that abhorrest idols:
dost thou rob temples?
thou who gloriest in the law
through transgression of the law dost thou
dishonour God?

(*c*) For circumcision indeed profiteth,
if thou be a doer of the Law:
but if thou be a transgressor of the Law
thy circumcision is become uncircumcision.

For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly:
neither is that circumcision which is
outward in the flesh;

But he is a Jew which is one inwardly:
and circumcision is that of the heart,
in the spirit, not in the letter;
whose praise is not of men, but of God."

One or two Stoic parallels will help to shew how genuinely Greek was this element of St. Paul's equipment which we are considering.

St. Paul writes thus:—

"Art thou bound to a wife? Seek not to be loosed.
Art thou loosed from a wife? Seek not a wife."
(I Cor. vii, 27, cf. 18.)

So in the Stoic Teles we find:—

"Art thou become an old man? Seek not the things
of a young man:
Or weak? Seek not the things of the strong."

The *Manual* and *Discourses* of Epictetus are full of passages which illustrate St. Paul's groups of *clausulæ*, with

their frequent questions, and their refutation of imaginary objections, and their use of antithesis :—

" Never say of anything that you have lost it :
but that you have given it back to the giver.
Has your son died ? He has been given back.
Has your land been taken from you ? This too has been given back.
But, you will say, it was a bad man who took it.
What business is it of yours, through whom the giver took it back again ?
No : as long as he gives it, use it as a loan,
or as travellers use an inn."
(Epictetus, *Enchiridion*, xv.)

or again (xiii) :—

" Do not ask that things should happen as you wish :
but wish that things should happen as they do,
and you will do well.

Ill-health is a hindrance to the body : but not to the will, unless the will so choose.
Lameness is a hindrance to the leg ; but not to the will.
Whatever crosses your path, speak of it thus :
You will see it as a hindrance to some other thing :
but not to yourself."

We should be alert, then, in reading St. Paul, to discern the traces of this type of literary art. We shall often find that it is easier to understand a passage when we see how it is built up ; even if we know no Greek, and are therefore unable to note the effects which are often gained through rhythm and rhyme, we shall see beauty where we had never seen it before, and we shall have a clearer conception of what St. Paul meant by becoming " all things to all men," and how his Greek education helped him to achieve it.

CHAPTER III

SAINT PAUL, THE RABBI

AS a Roman citizen of Jewish blood, nurtured in a great seat of Greek culture, St. Paul had a threefold or fourfold inheritance. That he was a townsman, and so stands in strong contrast with the central Figure of the Gospels, is written on every page of his letters, nor need the impress which the details of city life had stamped upon his imagination be reproduced here. That he was no countryman is plain enough from the metaphor in which he uses, but entirely inverts, the process of grafting a cultivated olive upon a wild tree (Rom. xi, 17-24). That from the Greek atmosphere of his native city he gained an easy familiarity with Greek ways of thinking and writing has been already pointed out; whether he was also strongly influenced by Greek religious thought and usage is a question upon which scholars disagree. His status as a Roman citizen gave him rights which were of great importance in the story of his missionary work, and the narrative of Acts brings these into frequent prominence, but they are of less weight for the understanding of the letters. Some of the chief difficulties in these, however, for the plain reader, arise from the fact that their writer was a Jew, a Pharisee by earlier conviction, and a Rabbi by training; and in the next few pages something must be said of the points at which the reader must be prepared to encounter stumbling blocks arising from this strain in St. Paul's inheritance; for unless we meet these with sympathy and understanding, the letters as a whole will remain obscure.

By the Jews of his own day St. Paul must have been judged to be a mere heretic, a radical and destructive apostate. There were good grounds for this judgment. He did preach a faith which he had formerly persecuted; he did pull down what he had formerly built up. And yet no one was ever less of a renegade at heart. To the end of his life he remained a Jew by conviction as well as by race, proud of his purity of descent, and glad to have been born a member of that people to which the oracles of God were committed. The only fundamental difference which separated him from the mass of his countrymen was that he saw in Jesus the fulfilment of all that his fathers had hoped for, all that his brethren still hoped for; and that his faith in Jesus as the Christ led him to frame a 'philosophy of history' in which the Mosaic Law was no longer, as it was to the Rabbis, the perfect revelation of the will of God. To his old friends among the Pharisees it may well have seemed that this dethronement of the Law was by far the gravest of his errors. They thought of the Law as the complete utterance of the Divine Wisdom, as an almost personal being, pre-existing in heavenly places before the ages and revealed in time through Moses as its mediator, with myriads of angels as its attendants. They believed its contents to be literally inexhaustible. "If all the seas were ink," said a Rabbi, "and all the reeds were pens, and all mankind were to write, they would not suffice to write out all that I have learnt from the Law; yet I have not diminished it so much as a man can diminish the sea by dipping into it the tip of his brush." In it they held that God had spoken His final word of revelation. A Rabbinical tract explains in this sense a passage from Deuteronomy (xxx, 11ff) of which St. Paul makes a very different use: "this commandment which I command thee . . . . is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us?" "Moses said to them," says the tract, "that ye may not say, (another Moses will arise and bring us another Law from heaven),

I tell you that the Law is not in heaven: nothing of it is left remaining in heaven."

Of this final and limitless revelation the scribes or lawyers were held to be the trustees; it was for them to draw out its meaning; and their interpretations, handed down from teacher to pupil in an ever-growing series, formed a body of oral tradition which was accounted as sacred as the Law itself.

So long as Saul, the pupil of Gamaliel, adhered to Jewish orthodoxy, "advancing in the Jews' religion beyond many of his contemporaries," he was himself a 'lawyer,' a student of the Pentateuch and an enthusiast for the traditions of the fathers. He was therefore committed to that view of the Law which we have just outlined; the Law was to him the sole and all-sufficient way of salvation. As a follower of Jesus, on the other hand, though he still allowed to the Law a certain limited place in the history of revelation, and a certain limited claim upon the allegiance of Jewish Christians, he strove with all his might to shew that Law can never save anybody, that God has something better to give us than Law, and that in Jesus Christ He has given it to us,—Grace has come, and the reign of legalism is ended.

One might therefore expect to find that a man who burnt so much of what he had adored would be eager to rid his mind of every trace of the associations which he had abandoned. But it was not so. For one thing, St. Paul was profoundly convinced that as a follower of Jesus he was a better Jew than he had ever been before. This must have seemed to his Jewish opponents to be an exasperating paradox, but it was in fact the key-stone of the structure of St. Paul's thought. "*We* are the circumcision," he proclaims (Phil. iii, 3); this new Israel is the Israel of God; the men of faith, the children of promise are the true children of Abraham. Thus he felt himself to be essentially a conservative, for all his radicalism; and this should be taken into account as helping to explain why, in Paul the Apostle,

we find so many traces of Paul the Jew and the Rabbi. And again, St. Paul was not a "convert from Judaism" in the sense that he came to regard Judaism as a false religion. He thought of it rather as an arrested development, an attempt to attain peace with God which was doomed to failure because it would not accept God's way of bringing men into peace with Him. And so the word which he uses for 'getting right with God' is just the same word that he had used as a Rabbi; it is the difficult word 'justification,' which has so large a place in the argument of the Epistle to the Romans.

According to the Jewish view, God is continually judging men, as the angels report upon their good or evil deeds. Man's duty is first to do the works of the Law, and then to add to these any other good acts which go beyond what is positively commanded. He will thus be laying up for himself a 'treasure' of merit, just as the Law-breaker "treasures up for himself wrath against the day of wrath" (Rom. ii. 5). His account may also be increased by the merits of good men of past ages. God stands to him in a legal relation of contract; He will 'justify' him, that is to say, will count him righteous, in exact proportion to the attempts he has made to fulfil the requirements of the Law, and so to keep the covenant unbroken. Now in St. Paul's teaching all this hard and commercial way of thinking about our relation to God is done away; the idea of a contract disappears before the vision of God's undeserved mercy; 'works' which we are to do give place to 'faith' in what God will do for and in us. Yet the language of 'justification' is still there, and St. Paul is still busied with problems about the 'imputation' of sin and righteousness to men, just because this was the language of his earlier years, and these were the problems which his rupture with Pharisaism first compelled him to face. The Pharisees said, "you can be justified if you can pay the proper price in the right coinage"; St. Paul made the discovery that we can be justified freely, 'for nothing,' and so striking

was the paradox that it never lost its influence upon the forms of his thought.

This survival of ideas, this persistence in ways of thinking which belong to the Scribes rather than to Christianity as we modern Gentiles understand it, is one of the things which make the Pauline letters hard reading. Still, though it is difficult to follow St. Paul with sympathy and understanding when the Rabbinical element in him is uppermost, we ought to realize how perfectly natural its survival was. The naturalness of it, and the effects it produced, are most easily seen in connection with St. Paul's use of the Old Testament, the great armoury from which all his lines of argument, except one, were derived. All his arguments but one: we must be careful to make this exception, for the greatest proof of all, the one on which the strength of the Christian position really depended, was one which no book could either establish or refute,—it was the argument from Christian experience, from what men actually gained from the spirit of Christ and from faith in Him.

Keeping this exception in mind, we may say that St. Paul was a completely Biblical theologian. So he had always been; so were the Scribes: and if St. Paul found in the Old Testament the warrant for a very different faith from theirs, yet he never ceased to work on their ground, and with implements and methods essentially the same as theirs.

There is a very wide difference between the ancient and the modern use of the Old Testament. The modern reader cannot handle the Jewish scriptures as though they were all of one piece or of one time. He feels that he ought to know, before he quotes a passage, what context it belongs to, and what stage in the growth of Hebrew religion it represents. He will feel that there is a real difference of historical value and spirituality between Chronicles and Isaiah, between Judges and Hosea. But this kind of sensitiveness in relation to the sacred documents is purely

modern. Neither the ancient Jewish world nor any but a small minority of ancient Christian teachers had any conception of religious development within the Old Testament. It is true that the Jews divided their books into three grades, the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings, regarding the Law as supremely inspired, and the Writings as lower in the scale of inspiration; but within the circle of the books which, as they said, "defiled the hands," they made no such distinctions as we are now compelled to make, nor were they troubled by the scruple which leads us to ask what a passage meant when it was written, and what its place is in the context to which it belongs. On the contrary, every sentence and every word was held to have a value of its own, and to be capable of bearing the weight of argument; the only constraint upon the interpreter was the necessity of keeping in harmony with the traditions already received.

Now while the *substance* of St. Paul's arguments from the Old Testament was utterly different from what a Rabbi could approve, the *form* of them was Rabbinical in the main; indeed, it would be difficult to find in St. Paul any example of a Biblical proof which could not be justified from the rules of interpretation which he had learnt as a Pharisee. A few examples will suffice to shew both how Jewish in form, and how anti-Jewish in substance, St. Paul's use of the Bible was.

Like the Rabbis he speaks of the Old Testament almost as of a personal being. "The scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the Gospel beforehand unto Abraham": "the scripture hath shut up all things under sin" (Gal. iii, 8, 22). "What saith the scripture?" is his common way of appealing to the Bible as though it were a person. Like the Rabbis he indicates the source of his quotations by referring to the subject matter of the section quoted. "The scripture saith in (the section relating to) Elijah" (Rom. xi, 2). There are cases, too, in which it is seen that he feels no

difficulty in quoting a text without reference to the context. Thus the passages from Hosea cited in Romans ix, 25 (" I will call her a people which was not my people ") really refer to the recalling of unfaithful Israel, but St. Paul uses them, as the Rabbis did, of the calling of the Gentiles. The quotation from Deuteronomy, of which we have already noticed the Rabbinical interpretation, is a specially good example of the way in which St. Paul uses a scripture in the Jewish manner, with words of interpretation inserted into it, to support a purely Christian argument. " The righteousness of faith saith thus, Say not in thy heart, who shall ascend into heaven (that is, to bring Christ down) ; or who shall ascend into the abyss ? (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what saith it ? The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart ; that is, the word of faith which we preach " (Rom. x, 6ff). Here a passage which originally teaches how easy the yoke of the Law is, a passage which had already become the subject of various interpretations, and had been wrested from its literal meaning, is pressed into the service of Christian teaching, with the aid of a change in the text which had perhaps been made before St. Paul's time ; for the words, " descend into the abyss " are not in the Hebrew or LXX, which read, " who shall go over the sea for us ? " There is nothing in all this, as far as the *form* of the argument goes, to which a Rabbi could object : nor is there in the difficult passage, Galatians iii, 16, where on the words of Genesis xxii, 18, " and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," St. Paul makes the comment, " he (or it) saith not and to *seeds* as of many ; but as of one, and to thy *seed,* which is Christ." Now the word ' seed ' in Genesis will not really bear this interpretation : yet not only do we find the word treated in the same way by the Jewish writer Philo, but also this treatment of it is merely an application of the Rabbinical principle that everything about a word in Scripture may be significant, including its number. St. Paul is simply arguing, as a Rabbi might,

that the singular word here has a special singular meaning.

One particular form of inference which is especially frequent in St. Paul is what we should call the argument *a fortiori*. Again and again we meet the phrase, "much more then . . . ."; and this is just an echo of the application of a Rabbinical rule that the interpretation can always infer 'from the less to the greater.' Thus the Rabbis said, if it is the rule that we should give thanks after eating, much more should we give thanks before eating. You will find examples of this mode of argument in the teaching of our Lord Himself. In St. Paul there is a typical instance in II Corinthians iii. We read in Exodus xxxiv, 29ff, that when Moses came down from Sinai, "the skin of his face shone, by reason of God's speaking with him." The Jews believed this glory on the face of Moses to be the permanent sign of the perfection of his vision of God and God's will. St. Paul interprets it otherwise. That glory was transitory: and "if that which passeth away was with glory, much more that which endureth is with glory." Thus a passage in which the Jew saw the abiding dignity of the Law becomes in St. Paul a witness to the greater glory of that by which the Law is superseded: but the form of the argument is purely Jewish.

Again, if you look in the Old Testament to verify St. Paul's quotations, you will sometimes find that he combines passages from very different sources to make one quotation. In some cases this is very probably due to the fact that he was using a collection of scripture proofs, in which the verses were already so combined: but in others he seems rather to be merely following the Rabbinical rule which allowed the legitimacy of arguing from any two texts, or perhaps, the practice according to which a specially complete proof was supplied by combining a text from the Law with one from the Prophets and a third from the 'Writings.' There is an appeal to Prophecy appended to an appeal to Law in Romans x, 19ff; while in order to see how the combining of passages works out, it is worth while

to trace, by looking up the Old Testament references, the quotations in Romans iii which prove the universality of sin, and those in II Corinthians vi, 16ff., which are used to shew that Christians are the temple of God.

Yet again, St. Paul regards the whole Old Testament as in a sense 'prophetic'; "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning." So also the Rabbis taught, and they would all have accepted the teaching that the experiences of the Jews in the wilderness "happened unto them for a type, and were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (I Cor. x, 11). But they would have rejected entirely the use which St. Paul makes of this principle. They would have said, "the Jewish past belongs to the Jewish people, the people of the Law"; St. Paul said that the Jewish past belonged to the Christian people, God's true Israel; and when he speaks of the Old Testament stories as having been written "for our admonition," or says that "our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea," the word *our* refers to the Christian Church, as the true successor of "the Church which was in the wilderness."

It is almost entirely in connection with this use of the Old Testament as a storehouse of types, foreshadowing Christ and the Church, that we find St. Paul making use of allegory, and of those illustrative stories about Biblical characters which the Jews called the *Haggada*. There is a very difficult instance of allegorical interpretation in Galatians iv, 21-31, a passage which cannot but seem strange or even perverse when it is read as a lesson in Church. Consider what it means. We may perhaps paraphrase it thus:—the story of Abraham is not merely a narrative of something that happened long ago; we are meant to look beneath the surface of it, and to discover there a series of pictures which illustrate some of the profoundest truths of religion. It is a double series; on the one side it represents the highest things, such as sonship

to God, freedom in Christ, and the heavenly city of which we Christians have been made citizens. These are foreshadowed by Abraham, the Father of those who have faith, by Sarah, the free-woman, by Isaac, the free-born child of promise. On the other side stand the things which belong to the lower stages of man's spiritual education, such as Law and servile obedience, which are typified by the slave-woman Hagar, with her slave-child, "born after the flesh," by Mount Sinai, and by the earthly Jerusalem. The higher and the lower must needs conflict; and the tale of Isaac and Israel is a concealed prophecy of the conflict which now exists between the religion of Christian freedom and that of Jewish servitude.

Now we may ask, "what right had St. Paul to say that this part of the story of the patriarchs was written allegorically, and to find in it a meaning so far removed from the actual sense of the passage?" To answer this fully would need a long discussion; here we need only say that interpretations of this kind were recognized as legitimate by all Rabbis; those of Palestine used them sparingly and soberly, and those of Alexandria with the wildest freedom. Indeed most people in St. Paul's time would have agreed that this was a proper way in which to get at the meaning of an ancient author; devised originally by Greeks as a means of exonerating Homer from the charge of telling immoral tales about the gods, it had long been taken over by Jews as a means of smoothing out the rough edges of the Old Testament for Greek readers. It had, in fact, become a current way of expounding the general truths underlying ancient texts; and we should remember, when we find it in St. Paul, that it was just one more tool from the Rabbis' workshop, and one which no Jew would have hesitated to use.[1]

[1] When St. Paul is pleading for the right of the Apostles to be maintained by the Church (1 Cor. ix, 9) he quotes as his authority the Old Testament words, "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn," adding "Doth God care for oxen, or saith he it altogether for our sakes?" This use of the Old Testament text is quite in

The fourth chapter of Galatians contains, besides the allegory described above, one of St. Paul's references to the *Haggada*. "He that was born after the flesh, that is Ishmael, persecuted him that was born after the spirit, namely Isaac." Now we do not read in Genesis that Ishmael persecuted Isaac but that Sarah saw the son of the Egyptian mocking or playing. But there is a Rabbinical story that Ishmael's play took the form of shooting an arrow at Isaac, and it is apparently to this that St. Paul's words allude.

Another of these narrative additions to the Bible story is referred to in a very difficult passage in I Corinthians x: "All our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of the spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ." The identification of the Rock which Moses smote with his rod with Christ was a familiar theme for scripture proof both in Christian and also perhaps in pre-Christian times. But what is meant by the Rock following the Israelites? This goes back to a very ancient and fanciful interpretation of the story in Numbers xx combined with xxi, 16ff. Looking at the latter place you will find that the words 'they journeyed' are in italics, that is to say there is nothing answering to them in the Hebrew text. The Targum on this passage took verses 19 and 20 as referring to the well itself, and interpreted those verses thus: "the well was given to them in the wilderness, and from the time that it was given to

the Rabbinical manner, for although the Rabbis disliked the allegorical use of texts enjoining mercy to animals, yet the reference in the Law to clean and unclean animals had long given rise to symbolic interpretations. Greek-speaking Jews in particular were unwilling that other Greeks should think the God of their religion to have been interested in such creatures as mice and weasels, or in such distinctions as that between animals which chew or do not chew the cud. Old Testament passages of this kind were therefore habitually treated as allegories.

them it descended with them to the rivers, and from the rivers it went up with them to the height, and from the height to the vale which is in the fields of Moab." In this we see whence the legend of the Rock that followed the Israelites took its origin, and we find it in St. Paul, as we might expect, in a place where he is setting out the typical correspondence between the experiences of the old Israel and the new. In the Red Sea, he says, in the manna and in the smitten rock, we are to see the foreshadowing of the Christian sacraments, Baptism and the Eucharist, just as in the fate of those who perished by the serpents we are to read a warning for ourselves. The fathers of the ancient church had their typical sacraments and yet many of them were overthrown in the wilderness; we who have the real sacraments must not think that our privileges can relieve us of the responsibility for taking heed lest we fall.

It must not, of course, be imagined, and I do not mean to suggest, that St. Paul's use of the Old Testament was no higher nor more deeply spiritual than that of his former teachers. No one who has read anything about the Bible interpretations of the Rabbis could suppose such a thing; but there are many places, especially in the four longer Epistles, where it is especially hard to follow St. Paul if we judge him by modern literary standards. We can only catch his meaning if we realize that he is using there, as it was natural that he should use, the methods which he had acquired long before his conversion.

His use of the Old Testament in general is that of a man whose mind is largely saturated with biblical memories; who is persuaded, first, that the Jewish scriptures contain a real revelation of God, and next that this revelation is partial and cannot be fully understood except in the light of Him Who has fulfilled it. The Christian community from its very beginnings gave itself up to searching the Scriptures, in order to find in them the justification for their belief that Jesus, though crucified, was none the less

the real Messiah. In the early days of his conversion St. Paul must have shared in this search, and have brought to it the wealth of his trained familiarity with biblical exposition. He was simply the first great Christian who, working along the same lines as his fellow-believers, made the definite claim that the old Scriptures, veiled from the Jews by their want of faith, are in truth the Bible of the Christian Church, its divinely given guide and the prophetic authorization of its faith in Jesus.

CHAPTER IV

THE LETTER TO THE GALATIANS

THE letters found among the Egyptian papyri are all, I believe, furnished with an indication of the date and place of writing. But many literary collections of correspondence have come down to us without any such helps to the reader; such, for instance, are the letters of Pliny and of the great Christian Fathers, St. Cyprian, St. Augustine, and others. Those of Cicero are not all dated; in the days when the person delivering a letter was normally a messenger sent by the writer himself, it was easy enough for the recipient to ask the *tabellarius* where he had come from and how long he had been on the road, and Cicero seems sometimes to have relied upon this.

Such undated letters are sometimes quite easy to arrange in their proper order. When Cicero writes to Atticus thus: "my host here says that the situation is as bad as it can possibly be; that if so great a man could find no way of escape there is little chance for anyone else; that he has hardly opened his lips to a soul since the Ides of March," one sees at once that the letter must have been written very soon after the murder of Cæsar. Internal evidence like this can also often be supplemented from other contemporary documents, or from the historians of the time. In the case of Cicero's letters, for instance, the external evidence is plentiful; the dated letters help to date the others, and there is the whole mass of Cicero's speeches in the background, together with the other authorities for Roman History, so that scholars are never baffled here by lack of material.

With the letters of the Christian Fathers, however, such as St. Augustine and St. Jerome, the case is different; the external evidence is at the best rather scanty, and it is a real misfortune that those who edited and copied these collections did not preserve the marks of time and place. As for St. Paul, we must suppose that the originals of his correspondence possessed these marks, but that when the letters were put into general circulation as Church documents, the marks were removed, on the ground that such details were not necessary, since the letters were preserved for the common use of all the Churches, and for that purpose it was no longer important to remember exactly when or where they were written.

Some of the Pauline letters date and place themselves quite clearly. The Thessalonian correspondence, for instance, was certainly written from Corinth, very soon after the foundation of the Thessalonian Church, and before the end of the second missionary period; Romans was also written in Corinth, just before St. Paul's last journey to Jerusalem; Philippians, Colossians and Ephesians date from a time when St. Paul was a prisoner, and with no serious doubts we can assign them to the period of his captivity in Rome, though the order in which they were written is uncertain; II Timothy dates itself after the Apostle's first trial and acquittal.

Of course we have some external evidence, namely that of the Acts, to assist us in all questions relating to St. Paul. But even this does not enable us to find a clear answer to the question,—which of the extant letters was written first? It has commonly been supposed that the Thessalonian letters must head the list. But where are we to place the Epistle to the Galatians? As far as its general subject is concerned it is strongly akin to Romans, and if it is reasonable to think that letters about the same general subjects are likely to have been written about the same time, we shall have to place Galatians and Romans together, towards the end of St. Paul's career as a missionary. But

although almost every possible date has in fact been suggested for Galatians, the obstacles in the way of assigning it to the same period as Romans are not easily surmounted, and the view which will be adopted here is that Galatians is the earliest of the Epistles.

The right way to approach this question is to ask first of all what St. Paul tells us himself in his letter, and what he leads us to infer. That is to say, we ought to consider the internal evidence first of all by itself, and not bring in any external considerations till we have found out what St. Paul himself has to say, since his authority must naturally outweigh any other, even that of a careful historian like St. Luke. Look therefore at the text of Galatians for the indications of date which it supplies. The first of these is in Gal. i, 6, "I marvel that ye are *so quickly* removing from him that called you": the words themselves reveal that they cannot have been written very long after the foundation of the Galatian Church. Yet we have to confront them with another passage which apparently gives a different impression: "ye know that because of an infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you τὸ πρότερον, the first (or, former) time" (Gal. iv, 13). Does this mean that before the writing of the letter St. Paul had already paid more than one visit to South Galatia[1]? If so, the impression made by i, 6 must be strongly discounted.[2]

[1] We may take it as certain that the Churches addressed in this letter were those founded by St. Paul, on his first journey, in the southern part of the Roman province of Galatia. The older view, that the "Galatians" were Celts living in the region of Ancyra, is still supported by some scholars (e.g. Moffat and Lietzmann), but is nearly extinct in this country.

[2] This problem must be left to the reader's own investigation. He should first read the whole passage iv, 13-15, and consider whether it really suggests, or is compatible with, a second visit, quite distinct from that on which St. Paul evangelized the Galatians. Can the writer possibly mean "when I first came to you, you were very kind to me—there was a second visit of mine of which I say nothing —and now you are treating me as an enemy?" If not, the words "the first time," must have some other sense; and indeed they may mean either (1) "at the beginning" or (2) "on the first of

We come next to the autobiographical details given in i, 13—ii, 14. The earlier references in these verses do not concern us here, but the opening of chapter ii is of crucial importance. "Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus also with me. And I went up by revelation, and I laid before them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately before them who were of repute, lest by any means I should be running, or had run, in vain." The reader must consider why St. Paul is enumerating his visits to Jerusalem;[1] he will probably be led to the conclusion that the visit mentioned here is the second visit since the conversion, and that no later visit has intervened before the writing of the letter. One other series of events is alluded to in this section; a coming of "certain from James" (i.e., from Jerusalem) to Antioch, which caused serious trouble between the conservatives and liberals there, i.e., between those who held fast to the food restrictions of the Jewish law and those who treated them as no longer binding, at least for Gentile Christians. When did this trouble arise?

It is upon these questions that the dating of Galatians must depend, as far as the internal evidence goes. But at this point the external evidence must be brought in. According to the narrative in Acts xv, "certain men who came down from Judæa to Antioch" began to teach the necessity of circumcision for Gentile converts: and as a result of the dispute to which this gave rise, a delegation which included St. Paul and Barnabas was sent to Jerusalem, where the matter was discussed before the apostles and elders (including St. Peter) and a formal decision was reached. This decision, directed at first to the Gentile

the two visits which I paid you at the time of your conversion."

[1] The question is whether St. Paul's line of argument requires him to mention all the journeys to Jerusalem which he has made up to the time of writing; i.e., whether he could have omitted the famine-visit without weakening his case. The reader must consider what importance the enumeration of these journeys has, in relation to St. Paul's independence and his right to be called an apostle.

Christians of Antioch, Syria and Cilicia, was taken by St. Paul to South Galatia on his next journey and explicitly communicated to the Churches there.

Now if we turn from Acts to Galatians, we find nothing in the letter which would suggest that its writer knew of any formal decision upon the crucial question at issue between him and his converts; and conversely we feel that if such a decision had been reached, it is hard to believe that St. Paul would have failed to mention it. Further, we find mention in chapter ii of an acute dissension between St. Paul and St. Peter at Antioch; and we feel once more that the situation described there could not possibly have arisen after the Apostolic council.

The most natural inference from all this is that the journey to Jerusalem described in Galatians ii, 1-10, is an earlier one than that which led to the meeting of the Apostolic council; and this inference is strengthened when we observe that these verses speak very clearly of a purely private consultation with the apostles, and that they name three results, and three only, as emerging from it—(1) the cordial recognition of Paul and Barnabas as fellow-workmen with the Twelve; (2) the recognition of St. Paul's sphere of work as distinct from that of St. Peter, and (3) an injunction to remember the poor: while of the last of these it is said "this was the very thing that I (had) endeavoured to do." All this fits in very much better with St. Luke's account of the relief visit paid by St. Paul and Barnabas at the time of the famine than with the narrative of Acts xv; and if we can think that Galatians ii, 1-10, corresponds with Acts xi, 27-30, where the relief journey is narrated, we find no difficulty in what Galatians tells us of the dissension with Cephas, which is thus seen to precede the Council, and so to fall into a more natural place.[1]

If all these clues are followed up, we reach the conclusion

[1] Authorities of weight, however, who take a different view of Galatians ii, 1-10, urge that Galatians ii, 11-14 need not necessarily refer to a later time than 1-10, and this contention is perfectly sound as far as it goes.

that Galatians was written before the events described in Acts xv took place, that is to say, between the outbreak of the dissensions at Antioch and the decision by which the central points of that dispute were settled; and therefore that it is by many months the earliest of St. Paul's extant letters. I think that we can adopt this conclusion here, without pretending that it solves all the difficulties of a very complex historical problem. It serves at any rate as a good working hypothesis, and I think we shall find just a little support for it in the Thessalonian letters when we reach them.

The Galatian mission, begun, as we learn from Gal. iv, 13, through some change of plan made necessary by the Apostle's ill-health, led to the establishment of organized Christian communities (Acts xiv, 23), which were left to face the strong opposition of the linked communities of Judaism. They were sustained alike by the fervour of the new faith and by warm affection for their missionary founder, and prepared by his warnings for the persecutions which they were sure to encounter (Acts xiv, 22). St. Paul looked back on his work with gratitude and hope; God had used him and Barnabas to achieve a definite result—a door of faith was now open to Gentiles (Acts xiv, 27).

In St. Luke's account of the preaching at Antioch in Pisidia there is a hint of the characteristic teaching which was afterwards to become the centre of acute controversy in all Pauline Churches, and in the Galatian Churches first of all. "In Him everyone that believes is justified from all things *from which ye could not be justified by the Law of Moses*" (Acts xiii, 39). This pronouncement must have sounded ominous and disturbing to many of the Jews who heard it made. It must have confirmed their worst suspicions: it was true then, they would feel, that this travelling teacher's message contained something far less acceptable than the mere announcement that the expected Christ had in fact come. It was a message of disloyalty to the

old religion, a dethronement of the Mosaic revelation from its supremacy. What heresy could be worse than to teach that it was possible to 'get right with God' through the crucified Nazarene, and that the old way of 'getting right' with Him had been a failure?

It is easy to understand the bitterness with which St. Paul was hunted from city to city by the authorities of the Synagogue: easy also to see that the Gentile 'God-fearers,' who had never lived the life of the law in its fulness, would be attracted to St. Paul's Gospel by the very thing in it which shocked the authorities most. But then we must remember that St. Paul's converts were not all Gentiles. He won over some Jews also: and while these, in the first fervour of their adhesion to the new teaching, and in the first glow of interest in the spiritual gifts which were the normal fruit of conversion, might be almost unconscious of the break that was being made between their old life and the new, yet a reaction was bound to come: and then the power of the old associations would re-assert itself, and they would ask whether, after all, the new freedom preached and practised by St. Paul was really according to God's will: whether he and they had not after all gone too far, and whether they ought not to return to the old strictness of the legal life, while still keeping their hold on the belief that Jesus was the Christ. From such wavering Jews, the movement of hesitation would naturally spread to the larger body of Gentile converts. Most of them, if not all, had learnt their first lessons of the One God from the Synagogue and the Old Testament. They had come within the influence of a great religion, and had felt the attraction of its potent and venerable traditions. For them, too, it might well prove harder to break away into an untried freedom than they had at first imagined.

St. Paul's first journey came to an end: he left the newly organized communities to face the task of 'carrying on' without the present inspiration of his personality, and perhaps neither they nor he realized how unstable, in spite

of its hopefulness, was the spiritual situation which he left behind him. A word or two from some outspoken advocate of conservatism would suffice to release all the forces making for compromise and reaction, which had been unconsciously repressed so long as the apostle of freedom was present.

It was a bitter tragedy for St. Paul, but a blessing for the Church as a whole, that the catastrophe thus prepared for did actually happen. The opposition between St. Paul's teaching and that of Pharisaic Judaism was fundamental. A conflict was bound to come: the issues were too great to be evaded; it was well for Christianity that they were fought out by St. Paul in person, and that he, fighting almost alone, and suffering profoundly in the conflict, should establish the supremacy of Christ over the Law and the complete freedom of the Gentiles within the Church.

The story of this conflict begins, so far as St. Paul's letters are concerned, with the Epistle to Galatians: it continues through the whole series of the letters down to those of the final captivity: and only in Ephesians does the final note of thanksgiving for victory ring out.

Now even before the Galatian letter was written, troubles had arisen in the Syrian Antioch about the position of Gentiles in the Church. These had arisen, very naturally from the fact that the Jews had strict rules about prohibited kinds of food and about the way in which animals ought to be slaughtered. A Jew could not share the meals of a Gentile household without the practical certainty of having food offered him which was not ceremonially clean. How then could Jewish and Gentile followers of Jesus eat together without scruple?[1] At Antioch this difficulty was

[1] Our Lord's utterance recorded in Mk. vii, 15-19, was interpreted by the evangelist as annulling the Mosaic food-laws. But that utterance can hardly have been known to St. Paul at the time of the Galatian controversy; otherwise he could not have failed to appeal to it.

ignored, it seems, for a time, but all the old scruples were awakened again by the advent of Christians from Jerusalem, where liberal practices in this matter were unknown; neither Peter nor Barnabas was strong enough to swim against this current of reaction, as we learn from Galatians, and for a time at least St. Paul found himself without support. We are assuming here that the formal discussion of this difficulty, with the problem of circumcision included, which is described in Acts xv, had not taken place before the Galatian letter was written. But the Galatian Churches had been swept away by a current similar to that which had caused the reaction of Antioch. Teachers had invaded them, men whose names St. Paul either did not know or chose to ignore, spreading a version of the Gospel which worked like magic upon unstable minds (Gal. v, 10; iii, 1; iv, 17). From St. Paul's point of view the result was confusion and apostasy. The strong personal influence of his supplanters, and the success with which they paraded their own conformity to the ancient ways, in spite of their patent inconsistencies, obliterated all the impression which had been made by St. Paul's gospel of freedom. There was a general movement back towards Judaism, a shifting of the centre of religion away from Jesus to Moses and the Law. Let us summarise the 'conservative' case as we may infer that the Judaizing teachers stated it.

"The Church is a continuation of the religious life of Israel. Therefore it must be loyal to the heart of that life, which is the Law, as given through the father of the covenanted people, Moses. Every member of the true Israel, whether a born Israelite or a convert, must be loyal to Moses."

"Jesus himself never taught men to revolt from the Law. The men who put Him to death accused him falsely of law-breaking; and if we set the Law aside, we shall give them the best of reasons for repudiating both us and Him."

"Our religion is based on the Old Testament; but within the Old Testament we have no right to pick and choose; we cannot both appeal to the Prophets as foretelling the Christ, and throw over that very Law which the prophets obeyed. The Law is binding on the consciences of all men: if we set Jesus against the Law, we merely make Him an abetter of evil-doing."

"On what authority does this false liberalism rest which has been preached among you? Not on that of Jesus, nor on that of the Bible. It rests only on the word of a revolutionary and a renegade, who has no title to be called an Apostle; the Twelve are the Apostles, and this man has certainly no authority from them. Why then should you yield to the destructive influence of this dangerous man, who in pure independence preaches a gospel of his own, of human invention? It is not even as though he were consistent; he is not; at one time he preaches and encourages circumcision, and at another he denounces it."

"We do not wish to deprive you of the message of Jesus, which, as we must admit, this man brought you: but we wish to recall you to safety. You are being carried out into an uncharted sea; come back to the old moorings. You think yourselves free, but you are in fact merely rebellious. The only safe way is to obey the old rules, to enter the Church of the covenant by the covenanted way, and to earn merit by legal righteousness. Only those who do this have a right to be called followers of the Messiah, Christians."

The Galatian letter deals with the situation produced by arguments such as these, and with the fundamental religious principles which underlie them.

It falls roughly into three divisions: (*a*) The first two chapters are almost entirely concerned with the personal question of St. Paul's authority. (*b*) From iii, 1, to v, 11, we have a succession of arguments which hammer out the conviction that Jesus Christ and not Moses is the real clue

to the Bible. (*c*) From v, 12 onwards, the writer, knowing how badly the Galatian Churches have gone to pieces, tries to shew what sort of men Christians can be if Christ is fully accepted and followed: and at the end, taking the pen from the hand of his secretary, he adds a few last words of personal appeal.

We begin with a summary of the personal part of the letter, remembering that it is the work of a man who is suffering acutely, who feels that his best work is being undone, and that his whole future also, and that of his cause, is at stake. No wonder that he opens differently from all his other letters—you have only to turn over a few pages of the New Testament to see this—without a word of kindness. "I, Paul, sent by Christ himself and not in any way by man, brought you the one Gospel by the side of which there is no other—and you Galatians have renounced Him who called you, almost before the sound of your calling has died away."

The first nine verses are clear enough; it is after these that the difficulties begin. Remember that in almost every phase St. Paul is trying to refute some point of the case which has been made against him; he wants to help the Galatians by counteracting, drop by drop, the poison they have swallowed. We have therefore to make a mental re-construction, as we go on, of the things which he is contradicting. "I am not courting men's approval—as they say I am: I am not teaching a Gospel of human invention. What I teach was revealed to me by Jesus Christ. Once I was a persecutor and a Rabbi. But God, who had always destined me to become a messenger of His Son to the Gentiles, suddenly 'revealed His Son in me.' What did I do then? Did I refer to any human authority, or consult the original Apostles? I did not; it was three years and more before I saw one of them. I then spent a fortnight in Jerusalem to get in touch with Peter: but I had no personal dealings with Christians in Judæa at all. What is more, when after fourteen years I did lay 'my

Gospel' before the Apostles, they endorsed it entirely: I was cordially recognized as having a mission to the Gentile world (i, 10—ii, 10)."

"As for Peter, it is true that he and I had a dispute at Antioch: but this was simply due to his inconsistency—he was faithless to principles which he had accepted before (ii, 11-13)."

"If, as I argued then, faith in Christ, and not fidelity to Moses, is the way to acceptance with God, how can we cling to Jewish scruples? You cannot say that it is sinful to disregard them without saying that Christ teaches men to sin, which is intolerable. Yet that is the position in which I should be if I renounced the lessons I have learnt. I cannot do this. My whole life now hangs on Christ, and I cannot treat Him as if His death meant nothing to me"[1] (ii, 14-21).

[1] In this summary no account has been taken of the passage ii, 3-5. These verses have been the subject of endless discussion. Do they mean that Titus (*a*) was *not* circumcised in Jerusalem, or that he (*b*) *was* circumcised, but not under compulsion? The plain meaning of v. 3, is strongly in favour of (*a*). But the true text of v. 5, seems at first sight to tell on the side of (*b*); for while the R.V. reads at this point,—(the false brethren privily brought in) "to whom we gave place in the way of subjection, no, not for an hour," it is probable that this is not the true reading, and that what St. Paul said was that he *did* yield for a time to the false brethren; and accordingly it looks as if he meant, in v. 5, to admit that he did allow Titus to be circumcised.

And yet this interpretation, obvious though it may seem, makes nonsense of the passage, and especially of the last clause of v. 5. How is it conceivable that St. Paul can have thought that the circumcision of a Gentile would enable "the truth of the Gospel to continue" with the Gentile Churches?

There is only one way of extracting a tolerable meaning from these difficult and incoherent verses; and the clue to it is to observe that they really are not about the circumcision of Titus at all. The reference to Titus in v. 3 is flung in as a parenthesis, and ought to be printed in brackets, or between dashes, or even as a marginal note. The verses are about the *journey of St. Paul with Titus to Jerusalem:* that journey was undertaken because of the activities of the false brethren, and it was a temporary yielding to their pressure, accepted in order to secure a permanent advantage. Still, because St. Paul felt that he was doing this in obedience to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it was also true for him to say that the

" Some malign influence has blotted out from your minds the vision of the Messiah crucified. You seem to have forgotten your vivid experience of the Spirit: try to recall it, and ask yourself whether it came to you as the result of obeying Moses' Law, or through hearing the message of faith (iii, 1-5)."

" You want to be ' sons of Abraham.' Well, the vital point about Abraham was that he was a man of faith, and only such men are in the true line of succession from him —a line which is meant to include all the nations, and bring them a blessing (iii, 6-9)."

" Law does not bring a blessing: it tells you to do things, and condemns you as accursed if you fail. Now it is this curse connected with Law that Christ has done away, by hanging like one accursed on the cross, in order that Gentiles like you might have the blessing and the gift of the Spirit which comes through faith (iii, 10-14)."

" But—to argue with my opponents on their own ground —the story of our redemption begins long before Moses: it begins with God's promise to Abraham. God stands by that promise, just as men stand by their undertakings. The Law came centuries after, and was not meant to annul it: it was an afterthought, meant to last only till the coming of Christ, who is that ' seed of Abraham ' in whom the world is to be blessed " (iii, 15-20).

" Do not think that I want to belittle the Law: it is the best Law that there could be, but no Law can ever save anybody; all it can do is to keep men within a fence of prohibitions till a better gift can be given " (iii, 21-22).

" Mankind was kept under in this way, as children are kept under governance. When Christ comes, the rule of

journey was undertaken " in accordance with a revelation." That revelation was the guidance which induced him, much against his will, to make a voluntary submission of himself and his work to the judgement of " those who were of repute " in Jerusalem: if their approval could be obtained, the " truth of the Gospel," i.e., St. Paul's liberal teaching, would be safeguarded against all attacks, and the Gentile Christians could hold to it without molestation.

the pedagogue ends ; we come of age as God's children ; we are ' in Christ,' and all the old distinctions of race, condition and sex lose their importance ; we are all in Christ, and it is this relation to Christ which makes us Abraham's children and heirs " (iii, 23-29).

" That word *heirs* is worth following up. An heir during his minority counts for next to nothing, and has no freedom of his own. We were once like that : but now through Christ's coming we have the full status of God's sons ; and that is why the Spirit inspires us to speak to God as Father, and to claim our true place in His family " (iv, 1-7).

" It was natural in the old days that you should be enslaved to gods who were not gods. But now that you have been liberated, why go back into slavery ? and what a slavery ! with demons and astrological superstitions as your masters ! " (iv, 8-11).

" After all, the Pentateuch itself refutes those who want to make the books of Moses their only authority. Consider the inner meaning of the contrast between Sarah and Hagar, Isaac and Ishmael. Hagar's son could not be Abraham's true heir : the line of inheritance was traced through Isaac the child of promise, the son of the free-woman. Here we really have a contrast between two series of principles : on the one side stand Hagar, Ishmael, Sinai, the earthly Jerusalem, on the other Sarah, Isaac, Christ's freedom, and the heavenly Jerusalem. Our spiritual descent is from the free-born, our home is in the free city, Jerusalem which is above " (iv, 21-v, 1).

" In this matter there can be no compromise : you must choose between circumcision and Christ, and if you choose the former, you cannot stop there—you will have to bear the whole burden of the Law, the yoke of its bondage."

We have traced the line of thought, omitting the personal appeal of iv, 12-20, as far as chapter v, verse 2. Here St. Paul breaks off, in a very characteristic way. The words " entangled in a yoke of bondage " suggest to him various associations—the deadliness of the deception which he is

combating, the tragedy of the Galatians' fall, the grave responsibility of those who caused it, and the haunting suspicion that he himself is inconsistent. His mind darts off along these tracks, so that for a dozen sentences all coherence is lost: only through their passionate confusion there shines a gleam of hope that all may yet be well.

Then in v, 13 the theme of v, 1 is taken up again: the thoughts of freedom, with its obligations and dangers, and of the true secret of freedom and inner peace, lead on to that of life in the Spirit, of what life in the Spirit makes of men, as contrasted with life in the 'flesh'; how we ought to work together with God in self-effacing, generous lives, humble in our judgment of others, bearing each others' burdens. So the main body of the letter is brought, after a stormy voyage, to a quiet end.

The little postscript, written by St. Paul himself in the large hand that contrasts with his secretary's work, needs no summary. But the reader should note alike the pathos of the personal appeal which it makes, and also its reiteration of the great truth which St. Paul discerns above the clouds of controversy;—circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the 'new creation' in Christ is everything. St. Paul was a fighter, but he was no partisan, who could be satisfied with a party triumph; in every conflict we shall find him fixing his mind on some high inclusive truth which transcended all the lesser points for which the disputants on either side were contending.

If we are right in placing Galatians at the head of the list of the Epistles, St. Paul paid two more visits to the Galatian Churches after the writing of his letter (Acts xvi, 1-5, xviii, 23). On the first of these he and Silas, "as they went on their way through the cities, delivered them the decrees for to keep which had been ordained of the Apostles and elders that were at Jerusalem." We may hope that before this official charter of Gentile freedom was promulgated, the personal influence of St. Paul had had time to reassert itself

and that his letter had had some effect in winning back the loyalty of the Gentile Christians. As regards the Jewish element, the situation was complicated, it seems, by the novel case of Timothy, whose mother was a Jew and a disciple, but whose father was a Gentile and apparently still a Hellene in religion. "Him," says the Acts, "Paul took and circumcised, because of the Jews that were in those parts: for all knew that his father was a Hellene (xvi, 3)." This is a puzzling piece of history: it seems strange, at first sight, that at the very time when St. Paul was proclaiming the decision that no Gentile need submit himself to the Jewish rite of initiation, he should deliberately take a course of action which must have seemed to weaken the force of that decision. The solution of the difficulty may lie in the fact that St. Paul was deeply anxious to gain over the Jews, and was always ready to "become as a Jew" for their sake; while Timothy's case was one that lay on the borderland of the matters in dispute—he was neither a pure Jew nor a normal Gentile, and the fact that he had lived on the confines of the Synagogue, an uncircumcised God-fearer, half Jew by birth, and therefore one on whom the Jewish Law had a strong claim, may have already raised serious scruples which only such a decision as that of the Apostle could allay. The circumcision of Timothy may then be regarded as a concession, designed to convince the Jews, both within and without the Church, that St. Paul still regarded the Law as sacred for those who had been born under the Law. The time had not yet come when the liberation of the Jew from the ancient yoke of the Law could be proclaimed as part of the Gospel. The task of the moment was to secure the freedom of the Gentile, and at the same time to set Christ crucified before both Jew and Gentile as the Redeemer of all men, and His Gospel as the fulfilment of the ancient promises of God. For this purpose it was essential to prevent the Gentile from seeking salvation through the Law; it was not necessary to detach the Jew from loyalty to the customs of his forefathers.

So long as the supremacy of the new gift of God in Christ was fully recognized, the old discipline could still be allowed its own place in the ordering and hallowing of life ; it might even still serve as a ' tutor ' to bring the people of the Synagogue to Christ.

In the main we may hope that the Galatian letter achieved its purpose, as an appeal to the South Galatian Churches.[1] It also enabled St. Paul to formulate, and in that region at least to establish, the great principles of Christian freedom and of the supremacy of God's grace, principles to which he was to give ampler expression in a calmer mood in the great Epistle to the Romans. But this initial achievement was no final victory. The conflict with Judaizing opponents, begun in Antioch and Galatia, was to be renewed again and again in other fields, and to trouble the Apostle's peace of mind for many a year. The traces of this conflict will be found in nearly all the subsequent letters ; only in those to Thessalonica, which we are now to consider, is no trace of it to be found.

[1] In support of this we may notice that before writing I Corinthians St. Paul had given directions to the Galatians about the " collection for the saints " (I Cor. xvi, 1), and that on his last journey to Jerusalem he took with him two Galatians who may have acted as the representatives of Galatia in presenting the contribution of their group of Churches (Acts xx, 4). Presumably, then, the anti-Pauline agitation in Galatia had only a transient success.

CHAPTER V

THE LETTERS TO THESSALONICA

ST. Paul's response to the vision which bade him carry the Gospel westwards was a real turning point in the history of the world. Born in Asia, and Asiatic in all its spiritual ancestry, the Church of Christ was destined to come to maturity in Europe, and in those parts of the Near East which are most accessible to European influence. The forms of its government and of its intellectual life were destined to be developed along Western lines. It was to become, in the course of a century, the Church of an empire which had its origin and its earliest centre in the West. It was to leave by far the greater part of the East untouched by evangelization for many centuries. Only in our time, when the Churches of the Far East are reaching maturity, and beginning to exercise some influence on the thought and policy of the people, is it becoming possible to realise how momentous was the impulse which drew the feet of St. Paul towards Europe and the West.

Macedonia was the first country in which the Christian faith was preached when it crossed from Asia into Europe. Philippi, the first-born of the Macedonian Churches, has been extinct for centuries. The Church of the Thessalonians still lives, and although it belongs ecclesiastically to the East, Salonica may claim to be, in a geographical sense, the senior Church of European Christendom.

Travelling westward from Philippi along the great Egnatian road, St. Paul would reach Amphipolis in one day, Apollonia on the next, and Thessalonica by a rather

longer stage on the day following. At neither of the intermediate places was there a Jewish Synagogue, nor even, as at Philippi, a place of prayer, but the great commercial cities of Thessalonica and Berœa had Jewish populations of some size and importance. In Thessalonica the Jews were numerous; they had influence enough with the lower elements of the populace and with the civil authorities to engineer a riot and to turn it to their own advantage. There was a Synagogue in Thessalonica, and it was in the Synagogue that St. Paul began to preach, according to his custom (Acts xvii, 2f.). St. Luke giv s a summary of his message. It was addressed to men who believed in the coming of the Messiah, a Messiah who would come in triumph to destroy his enemies and bring in the new age. St. Paul set himself to show, from the Bible, that the Messiah of the prophetic expectation was one of whom it was predicted that before his final triumph he must come in humility to suffer and to die; that his death and resurrection were foretold in Scripture, and that the Christ whose advent both he and his hearers were looking for, was none other than the crucified Jesus. For the greater part of a month this message was tolerated in the Synagogue. Nor was it delivered in vain; there were born Jews who accepted it, though these were few in number, but the Thessalonian Synagogue had a large circle of Hellenic 'God-fearers' which included many women of high social rank, and it was from this field that the greater number of St. Paul's converts came.

St. Luke does not say clearly, in his very compressed record of the happenings at Thessalonica, how long St. Paul stayed in the city. In the Acts we only learn that for three Sabbath days, or three weeks, he reasoned with the Jews from the Scriptures (Acts xvii, 2), but it is clear from the Epistles that these three Sabbaths were followed by a considerable period of hard constructive work. The new Church had to be built up from the foundation and strengthened to meet the inevitable stress of persecution.

For this purpose St. Paul did not rely upon sermons alone. His work was intensive rather than extensive. He made friends with his converts one by one (I Thess. ii, 10ff), and devoted all his energy to the building up of individual character. For his converts' sakes, and in order to avoid unworthy suspicions, he determined to accept no help in Thessalonica towards his own maintenance, and settled down to work 'night and day' at his handicraft. All this must have taken time, and we know that St. Paul's sojourn in the city lasted long enough for two instalments of financial help to reach him from Philippi (Phil. iv, 16). St. Paul succeeded too well for his own safety. To draw away a large section of the most influential proselytes from the synagogue was a dangerous business. It had met with resistance from the beginning. Only 'with much tribulation' had the Gentiles received the Word (I Thess. i, 6). Finally, a public disturbance was instigated by the Jewish authorities; a successful appeal was made to the civil power, and further work in the city became impossible (Acts xvii, 5-9).

The Thessalonian Church was left to face not only the hatred of the Jews, who were strong enough by themselves to make a good deal of trouble, but the enmity of the Hellenes as well. St. Paul had been accused before the Politarchs as a treasonable revolutionary. His followers were sure to be involved in the same suspicion, yet, with both Jews and Greeks against them, they stood firm. They were well prepared for their troubles. To them, as to the Galatians, St. Paul had made it plain that "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." We shall see what difficulties arose from the form of his teaching about the coming troubles and the glory which would follow, for it is with these perplexities that the Thessalonian letters are mainly concerned. The Church within which they arose was a steadfast body of warm-hearted people, and the influence of its valiant faith spread rapidly within and even beyond the limits of Hellas. If

it betrayed some instability of mind in its attempt to interpret a half comprehended hope, or showed a certain unmoral unsteadiness in its response to the high demands of the Christian standard, it was never deliberately wrong-headed or perverse, nor did it ever falter in its personal attachment to the Apostle who had given it, not only the Gospel, but his own heart and soul as well (I Thess. ii, 8).

When St. Paul left the Thessalonians on his journey towards Berœa and Athens, he felt the severance from his friends as keenly as a bereavement (ii, 17). Time and again, from Berœa perhaps and from Athens, he tried to get back to them, but the political dangers were too menacing. "Satan," he said, "hindered us." Timothy, and perhaps Silas also, having been left behind at Berœa for a time, rejoined him, as it would seem, in answer to his urgent request, in Athens.[1] By this time St. Paul was keenly anxious to know how the Thessalonian Church was weathering the storm, and anxious also to send them the encouragement which he was prevented from bringing them in person. He therefore sent Timothy to Thessalonica on a mission of help and enquiry. By the time Timothy returned with his report, St. Paul had left Athens for Corinth, had begun his mission there in the synagogue, and had already discovered that, there as everywhere, his preaching would lead to dissension and would arouse strong forces of resistance. The first letter to Thessalonica, written on the basis of Timothy's report (iii, 6), was dictated at a moment when it had really become clear that Jewish opposition in Corinth would lead to serious trouble.

Assuming, as we have done, that the Galatian troubles, and the letter arising out of them, preceded the second missionary journey, I think we can understand the tone

[1] There is a gap here in the narrative of Acts, which only speaks of Silas and Timothy as rejoining St. Paul in Corinth, but it is clear from I Thess. iii, 1-2, that Timothy, at least, came to him in Athens. It is possible that Silas came also, and that both men were sent from Athens on different errands northward, to rejoin St. Paul later in Corinth.

of many verses in I Thessalonians. As St. Paul writes, trouble is beginning to hamper his work in Corinth—trouble arising from the Jews. He is not really afraid of what Jewish opposition may achieve from without, but is haunted by the fear that it may succeed in corrupting the Church from within. He has a vivid memory of the attacks which were made upon his own authority and character in the Galatian controversy, and of the opposition which the Jews have everywhere offered to the free admission of Gentiles to the brotherhood of the Messianic hope.

Such dangers do not menace the Thessalonian community: their perils come rather from the Gentile world. St. Paul does not need to write to them in the tone of the Galatian letter, nor to handle any of the subjects which filled its pages: yet the Galatian trouble, and its root in Jewish hostility, is present in his mind as he writes; he cannot forget "the Jews who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove out us, forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved" (I Thess. ii, 15f.). Nor can he forget the contrast between his happy friendship with the Thessalonian Christians and the personal wounds which have been dealt to him elsewhere. It was not in Thessalonica that he was charged with teaching evil and deceitfulness, with 'pleasing men' and seeking glory from them (ii, 3-4): nor was it there that he needed to prove the genuineness of his Gospel as a message given him directly from God. Nor was their reception of his preaching weakened by the disloyalty of which others had been guilty: they did not treat it as a 'mere word,' as a 'word of men,' nor frustrate what he had done for them, nor return to the 'idols' from which they had once for all turned away (ii, 13).

A sensitive reader will, I think, discern these overtones among the plainer notes which the Epistle employs, and feel that the writer has in the back of his mind not only the gathering difficulties which will have become more definite by the time that the second letter is written (II

Thess. iii, 2), but also the anxieties of an earlier time, the recurrence of which is present to him as a possibility and a menace.

This letter is not argumentative, like Galatians; it tells its own tale and needs no summary. But if it is read with this question in mind—what report did Timothy bring from Thessalonica to Corinth?—certain points of interest will stand out.

(*a*) He reported that in spite of the prevalent stress of persecution the faith of the Thessalonian Church was strong, and that its members were as anxious to see St. Paul as he was to come to them (iii, 6). But there were grave matters in respect of which they needed to make definite advance along the road of their earlier progress. One of these was purity of sexual life: in respect of this the sternness of the Christian standard had not been sufficiently realized. St. Paul even hints that it had been set aside, with injury to the spirit of Christian fellowship (iv, 2-8). A second was the duty of minding one's own business with diligence: failures in this respect had perhaps endangered the reputation of the Church and the self-respect and independence of its members (iv, 9-12).

(*b*) There was need also to warn the Thessalonians against faults such as would naturally be found in a new community which had not yet quite found its feet. There was a tendency to self-assertion, to the disparagement alike of authority and of the enthusiasm engendered by spiritual gifts. The Gospel of peace and gentleness was not fully understood (v, 12ff.). It was a sign of St. Paul's deep wisdom that he tried to remedy these evils by the simple plan of giving people something to do for each other—the task of encouragement, help and mutual patience.

(*c*) Other difficulties were arising from the ferment excited by St. Paul's teaching about the imminent end of all things. His message to Thessalonica had been like that of John the Baptist, and of our Lord himself: "repent ye, for the kingdom is at hand." Even in the synagogue he must

have dwelt on the coming end of all things. There would be many Jews there who would share his expectations. His message proclaiming Jesus as the Christ must have taken some such shape as this: "*we* expect the advent of the Messiah, with all its accompaniments of hope and fear, just as you do: but we, unlike you, know exactly *whom* we expect; it is none other than that Jesus who was crucified and rose again." In the further instruction given to converts, as both the Thessalonian letters show, the picture of the immediate future was drawn out in greater detail. Emphasis was laid above all on the certainty that a time of tribulation must precede the coming of God's eternal kingdom and glory. These dark days the Thessalonians would have to pass through; but they must face them as men called, predestined, expectant; God would preserve His saints through the awful crisis, would keep their hearts steady and would preserve their whole spirit, soul and body at the advent of the Saviour (v, 23).

St. Paul must have hoped that his friends, thus forewarned, would be forearmed, but his teaching had unforeseen results. Two special difficulties presented themselves. (1) It did not prove a simple matter to obey the plain call of every-day duty when the mind was intent upon the new age, of which any day might see the dawn (iv, 11f). (2) The hard facts of experience created a second problem, which even the steadier minds must needs feel acutely. If the Christian's business was simply to await the *Parousia*, how was it that Christians still died like other men; would it mean that they had forfeited the great opportunity? Was the glory of the kingdom reserved for those who should be left alive till the great day? If this were so, death, so far from being conquered by the resurrection, was invested with a new terror. To many of the Thessalonians this problem had caused grave disquietude (iv, 13ff).

St. Paul's message of comfort in this matter is introduced by the delicate phrases which he employs when he wants to remind people of something that their own perceptions

should have told them. "I would not have you ignorant, brethren," "ye have no need that I should write unto you" (iv, 13; v, 1). The one may be paraphrased thus: "I wish you had realised this before, but I would rather lead you than dictate to you"; the other thus: "I have already told you about this, and I only tell you now in order that you may recollect what is implied in the things that you already know."

The real clue to the problem, then, lay in the faith as St. Paul had already taught it. Jesus died; yet Jesus rose again. It was not to be thought that those who had died could be forgotten of God. For these, as for our Lord, there would be a resurrection. Those who survived till the *Parousia* (among whom St. Paul expected himself and many, at least, of the Christians of his day to be numbered) would have no place of privilege. They would await the resurrection of the believers and be translated with them; the whole assembled Church would meet the descending Lord as He came to enter into His kingdom (iv, 14ff).

That no man could foresee the date or appointed time of the end, the Thessalonians had already been told. "The day of the Lord, predicted by the prophets, would come like a thief in the night"; at a time when the people in darkness believed themselves to be in complete security, the birth-pangs of the new age would bring them to sudden destruction, but to the sons of the light and day there need be no night, so long as they were wakeful and expectant; they need have no fear, for the same divine decree which would overwhelm God's enemies in wrath would make sure of the salvation of the elect (v, 2-11).

This is the message of comfort with which the letter is charged. The watchword of fidelity to God's calling, which was the burden of St. Paul's first teaching (ii, 12), is repeated at its close—"He is faithful who calls you"—and is reinforced by an injunction to have the letter read to the whole assembled Church.

I Thessalonians, then, was presumably read to all the Christians of Thessalonica. But in spite of its teaching the ferment of Messianic expectation continued to work. The Thessalonian Church had much to endure: persecution was severe and continuous (II Thess. i, 4ff.). In those dark days the Thessalonian Christians might well find comfort in the thought of a time when God would vindicate Himself: but this was not enough. Believing—as St. Paul had encouraged them to believe—that their sufferings were the destined 'beginning of the end,' they found it easy to persuade themselves that it was now the last hour, that the day of the Lord had already dawned. Voices were heard proclaiming this truth as a revelation given by the Spirit: they were backed up by letters (or a letter) purporting to come from St. Paul himself (ii, 2); the community lost its mental balance and fell into a mood of feverish disquietude.

A steadying word was badly needed: the need was all the greater because the warning of I Thessalonians against idleness had not been heeded (iii, 6ff.), and the duty of quietly minding one's own business had to be re-stated with emphasis. St. Paul (and his companions) therefore sent a second letter to underline all that the first had said, to allay the prevailing excitement by means of further teaching, to strengthen the Thessalonians' endurance, and to suggest to them quiet thoughts and desires.

The letter was apparently written from Corinth, at a time when the apostles were hard put to it in the conflict with 'perverse and evil men,' and were perhaps discouraged by the discovery that the faith was 'not every man's affair' (iii, 1f).

In order to prevent further misrepresentation, it was signed by St. Paul with his own hand, and attention was drawn to the signature (iii, 17).

How could the Thessalonians be convinced that 'the day' had not really begun? By referring back to the teaching already given. Christ's coming, they had been taught, would be sudden: yet the march of events would

follow a certain order, disclosed to the Jews in apocalyptic prophecies. The *Parousia* of Christ would be preceded by the *Parousia* of Antichrist. There would be a 'falling away': and then the powers of evil, summed up and incarnate in one person, would exhibit all their strength and all their works of deception, only to be baffled and destroyed by the Christ. The working of these powers was already discernible in the persecution of the Church: yet for a time it was held in check. Soon the check—which we may perhaps identify with the rule of the Roman Law—would be removed. The 'day' was coming, but the prelude to the day must first come (ii, 3-12).

St. Paul would not feel that there was the least inconsistency between the pictures drawn in his two Epistles to Thessalonica. There was no difficulty in believing that the 'day of the Lord' would come unexpectedly and yet be heralded by terrible portents—as may be seen by a glance at the parallel teaching recorded by St. Mark and St. Matthew. Nor would the prediction of an Antichrist,—or even many antichrists—almost able to pass current among the very elect as the true Christ,—sound strange in any ears accustomed to the tones of the apocalyptist. The Jewish *Sibylline Oracles* supply parallels to nearly every detail of II Thessalonians ii. Here is their picture of the false Christ: "now . . . . shall Beliar return, and he shall move the high mountains and still the sea, shall make the . . . . sun and moon stand still, shall raise the dead and do many signs among men: yet shall not his signs be fulfilled. But he will lead many astray, and will deceive many faithful and elect of the Hebrews, and lawless men besides" (*Or. Sib.*, iii, 63-70). Here again is their picture of the 'falling away': (the great calamity will come) "when the faith of godliness has perished from among men, and righteousness is no more seen in the world"; "in the last time shall men be utterly evil" (iv, 152ff; v, 74).

There has come down to us, indeed, from later Judaism,

a whole literature of prophecy which uses just the same imagery and scenery as St. Paul. We may be sure therefore that when he drew the picture of the 'man of sin' and the great apostasy he was not consciously attempting to create a new prophetic vision; he was merely, as a Christian prophet, giving new form and colour to an old and widely current expectation; that before the final victory of good there would be a vast uprising of all the powers of evil, and before the coming of Christ there would be the manifestation of evil itself in some concrete form, making a last desperate and ineffective effort to grasp at the sceptre of God.

Yet there are two novelties in St. Paul's picture which have puzzled Christian interpreters from the very first. What did he mean by the 'restraining power,' which at present hinders the manifestation of the 'man of sin' and will hinder it until it is removed out of the way? And what is meant by the being who, though unrevealed as yet in his full malignity, yet even now "exalts himself against all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God"?

We shall never know the answer to these riddles: and indeed they were probably always meant to have an element of mystery.[1] Are we to think of Roman law and order as the 'restraining' power? or was Rome itself and its emperor the great opponent of God, and the Jewish commonwealth the restrainer? Anyone who knows the history of the interpretation of New Testament apocalyptic in the Christian Church must see in it a warning against taxing our minds overmuch with these questions. It is better to remind ourselves how vague and shifting, even within the New Testament itself, the figure of the 'antichrist' is; how mysterious its shape is here, and how strangely, in the Revelation, it takes on the lineaments of the emperor Nero himself, believed to be about to return

[1] We may remember, as illustrating this, the veiled character of a similar allusion in St. Mark xiii, 14.

to life as the incarnation of hostility to God (Rev. xiii, 3, 13f) ; and how in St. John's First Epistle, again, it has lost all its lurid colours and become simply the personification of the spirit that will not confess Jesus (I Joh. ii, 18, 22).

Further, it is very instructive to see how shifting in colour and outline are the pictures of the ' last times ' which are drawn by St. Paul himself : they are not the same in I Corinthians as in Thessalonians, while in Ephesians the *imagery* of the ' great time coming ' has almost faded out of sight. It was not rigid logic that created these quickly changing fantasies, but fervid religious expectation. Deep down below all that is variable in them there is a conviction which does not alter—that God is the Lord of human destinies, and that His righteousness will in the end prevail : even on the stage of human history He will vindicate Himself and those who trust Him : and in the end all forces that set themselves against God's holy will must come to nothing. History belongs to God. That is the central and abiding conviction to which all Jewish apocalyptic, and that of St. Paul among the rest, gives dramatic expression, with all the freedom of the poets and all the certitude of prophecy.

CHAPTER VI

THE CORINTHIAN DOCUMENTS

WE now come to the Corinthian letters. In this chapter I shall simply consider the documents, whether extant or lost, of which the correspondence consisted: after this we can pass on to review the contents of the letters which have been preserved.

When St. Paul first reached Corinth, he may well have been wondering whether it was worth while to have come so far south from Thessalonica. Athens had disappointed him: only a small group of converts had attached themselves to him there: his heart was still in Thessalonica, and he had tried, while still in Athens, to get back northward (I Thess. ii, 18). Hindered in this, he had sent Timothy to find out how things were going, and had gone on to Corinth alone (*ib.*, iii, 1, 2). The story of Acts xviii tells us how he fell in there with Aquila and Priscilla, and worked with them at their trade, and how he began his mission among the Corinthians. At first it was not an intensive campaign; it was confined to Sabbath Day 'reasonings' with Jews and proselytes in the synagogue. Only later, when Timothy and Silas had rejoined St. Paul, did the mission take such an aggressive form as to arouse keen opposition. Further work in the synagogue then became impossible, and St. Paul turned once more from his own people to the Greeks. Even then, however, it needed a heavenly vision to assure him that he had great opportunities in Corinth, and that he was called to settle there for a long period of work (Acts xviii, 9f). In the end he stayed there as a missioner to Gentiles for a year and a

half ; and when he went eastward again, he left behind him a vigorous and well-established Church, secured by Gallio's judgment from molestation either by the Jews or by the Roman authorities.

That security, however, was too easily purchased. Churches like that of Thessalonica, which were confronted with persecution from the outset, proved to be sounder at the heart than this less severely tested community. None of St. Paul's spiritual children caused him more suffering and anxiety than these. Their record is one of dissension, disloyalty, and disorder : they lacked discipline, they allowed their ideals to be lowered through unthinking contact with the heathen world around them, they were easy with themselves, and easily satisfied with the possession of gifts which it cost them little to exercise : and they were (as we should say) parochial in their outlook, failing to understand that the true sphere of their loyalty was the whole Church of God. The extant letters of St. Paul deal chiefly with the troubles which sprang from these causes. If the view taken in this book about those letters is right, the tragedy of those early days ended in the purification of the Church and the vindication of the Apostle. But it was a pitiful tale : and the only bright thread which is woven right through it is that of St. Paul's unwavering and even passionate tenderness for the friends who disappointed him so bitterly.

On leaving Corinth, St. Paul took ship with his friends for Syria, touched at Ephesus, where he discerned at once that his next great work would be found, travelled to Cæsarea and Jerusalem, and turned westward again to establish himself in Ephesus for a stay of some two years and a half (Acts xviii, 18 - xix, 1). At the end of that time he journeyed by way of Troas into Macedonia, and from Macedonia, after an interval, to Corinth. The homeward journey, after three months in Corinth, was the one which ended in his arrest at Jerusalem (xx, 1ff). The whole of the extant correspondence with the Corinthian Church falls

between the beginning of St. Paul's long stay in Ephesus and his departure from Macedonia (Thessalonica) for his last visit to Corinth.

But these extant letters present a different problem from any of the other Epistles, a problem which makes them at once more difficult and more interesting. In reading Galatians, it will be remembered, we had to reconstruct for ourselves the kind of argument and attack to which St. Paul was replying. The same thing has to be done in reading Corinthians, though not quite to the same extent: but these letters have also to be read as *part* of a correspondence, much of which is missing: we have therefore to reconstruct in our minds certain other letters and communications which passed between St. Paul and the Corinthian Church both before I Corinthians was written and between the writing of the documents which we call I and II Corinthians. We have also to make up our minds, in the course of this reconstruction, whether II Corinthians is in fact one complete letter as it stands, or a patchwork made up out of portions of two or three letters which were not preserved entire.

Together with this problem we have to face certain difficulties relating to St. Paul's movements and those of Titus. How often did St. Paul go to Corinth, and when were those visits paid? When did Titus go to Corinth, and how do his visits fit in with the dates at which we must suppose the various letters to that Church to have been written?

These intricate questions will not be discussed at length here. We shall only try to provide a working answer which may make it possible to read the letters intelligently: but it should be remembered that our answer is only provisional, and that while it could be supported by argument, and has been maintained by authorities of great weight, there is a great deal that has been said and may be said in favour of other solutions.

It is certain that 'I Corinthians' is 'first' only in the sense that it is the first of the letters which it was thought necessary to preserve for Church reading. There was an earlier letter (I Cor. v, 9) in which St. Paul had dealt with the question of the kind of social relations which Christians might legitimately maintain with those who did not accept the Christian moral standard. One may suppose that some occasion arose for the writing of that letter. Either it was sent because St. Paul had already foreseen, before leaving Corinth, that it would be necessary to guard against some risks of contamination arising from excessive freedom in this regard, or because news had reached him in Ephesus that those perils had arisen. In the latter case, this correspondence opened with a letter from Corinth, to which the lost letter was an answer. It is possible, but not certain, that a part of this lost letter survives. Let the reader look at I Corinthians v, 10-13, asking himself what sort of occurrence the passage must refer to, and noting that in these verses St. Paul is correcting a natural misinterpretation of what he had previously written. Then let him turn to II Corinthians vi. On reading continuously from vi, 11, to vii, 4, it will be seen that the verses vi, 14—vii, 1 interrupt the sense of the passage and that vii, 2 follows on exactly from vi, 13. If, then, the memory is taken back to I Corinthians v, it will be found that this fragment which breaks into the context of II Corinthians vi corresponds very closely to the kind of letter which we must imagine St. Paul to be referring to there. We may take it then as quite probable that we have here a fragment of the first letter to Corinth. And our inference, if it is right, is an important one. For if II Corinthians contains a displaced scrap like this, its integrity in other places may reasonably be thought open to doubt.

Next, there were certain communications which passed from Corinth to Ephesus after the writing of St. Paul's earliest letter and before the writing of I Corinthians, which is in large measure a reply to them. The Corinthians

themselves wrote to St. Paul a letter—it must have been quite a long one—asking for advice on many points of difficulty and probably sending also a good deal of information. St. Paul mentions this letter in I Corinthians vii, 1. That it dealt with some delicate and intricate questions about married life is certain. But we notice also that St. Paul's reference to it begins with the words, " Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote " ; and it is followed by sections in chapters vii, viii, xii, and xvi which also begin, " Now concerning . . . ." It is a natural inference that these sections also (at least) contain answers to questions raised in the Corinthian letter, which will therefore have dealt with the problems of marriage, of unmarried women living with Christian men under a pledge of chastity, of meat offered in sacrifice to idols, of ' spiritual gifts ' and their value, and of the collection for the poor Christians of Jerusalem ; possibly also with that of the status of women in the Church.

We must add that this letter was supplemented by the news which its bearers, and others, brought to St. Paul by word of mouth. The bearers of the letter were perhaps Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus (I Cor. xvi, 17), who may have taken back the answer, namely, I Corinthians, with them. Some news, and not pleasant news, was brought to Ephesus by " those of the household of Chloe " : we have no means of knowing what they had to report beyond the facts alluded to in I Corinthians i, 11ff ; but that St. Paul had a good deal of oral information is clear from the letters as a whole, and especially from such passages as I Corinthians xi, 18, where probably we have news brought by ' those of Chloe,' and from the depressing reports of immorality and litigiousness dealt with in v, 1ff, vi, 1ff.

I Corinthians, then, is the practical outcome of the situation thus disclosed to St. Paul. When it was written, St. Paul was contemplating a visit to Corinth, a visit which might have to be an unhappy one, an occasion for stern dealings with offenders (I Cor. iv, 21) ; writing towards

the end of his stay in Ephesus, he was then intending to leave there after Pentecost, to travel through Macedonia, and to stay in Corinth possibly over the following winter. Meanwhile he was sending Timothy to Corinth, and in his letter he claims a respectful hearing for him, expecting that Timothy would reach Corinth earlier than he himself could hope to do (I Cor. xvi, 10). It appears that soon after writing I Corinthians he first changed his mind about this journey, arranging to go straight to Corinth by sea, to go from Corinth to Thessalonica, and thence back to Corinth, and that afterwards he reverted to his original arrangements, for good and sufficient reasons (II Cor. i, 15f).

The Book of Acts tells us of St. Paul's first and last visits to Corinth; it does not tell us what we learn from II Corinthians, that the last visit was really the third. But St. Paul himself says "this is the *third* time that I am ready to come to you" (II Cor. xii, 14), and "I determined this with myself, not to come to you again in grief" (ii, 1); and from these passages it is clear that before writing any part of II Corinthians (except for the fragment mentioned above) he had in fact paid two visits to Corinth, one of which was a very painful experience. I cannot believe that this visit, with all its accompaniments of distress and failure, took place before the writing of I Corinthians. That letter seems quite clearly to represent the first stage of St. Paul's contact with the deeper tragedies of Corinthian Church life. Let us take it then that the second visit was a hurried voyage from Ephesus and back after the writing of I Corinthians and before any part of II Corinthians was written. Let us add that before the writing of II Corinthians xii, Titus, with a companion, had gone to Achaia to make preliminary arrangements for the collection for the Church of Jerusalem: while at the time when II Corinthians viii, was being written, he was just about to start, with two companions, to complete what he had begun the year before.

Now, however, we have one more letter to account for. Not only was there a visit of St. Paul to Corinth after the

writing of I Corinthians; there was also a letter, a letter of great severity, written "out of much tribulation and oppression of heart" (II Cor. ii, 4). One of the matters handled in it was the case of an offender who had wronged someone else very seriously, a case which called for punishment,—clearly a different case from that mentioned in I Corinthians v; but other painful things must also have been touched on, and in particular, the question of St. Paul's authority and his relation to the Corinthian Church. I should infer from II Corinthians iii, 1, that the letter contained some passage in which St. Paul was compelled to make a strong assertion of his claims.

This painful letter cannot possibly have been our I Corinthians. But is it entirely lost? The answer to that question depends on the view taken of II Corinthians as a whole. The letter should be read through continuously, in English, no notice being taken of its division into chapters. If this is done, it will be seen that we have here as difficult and obscure a document as can well be imagined. The difficulty arises in part from the fact that St. Paul writes throughout under the influence of very strong emotions, and in face of a very complicated situation. But every reader must feel also that there is an extraordinary difference between the earlier and the later chapters, in respect of the tone used, and the actual situation implied. I do not mean that at any point in the letter St. Paul writes without constraint or an undertone of sorrow; it is not so. But at any rate in chapter vii he does write as if the main difficulties of his position had been triumphantly solved; Titus, returning from Corinth, has met him with the best of possible news, and there is abundant occasion for thanksgiving: a bad chapter has been closed, and there is every reason to be hopeful for the future.

On the other hand, chapters x-xiii are of a totally different colour. They are full of misery and indignation, of passionate passages in which St. Paul defends his own apostleship against opponents who have belittled him and treated

him with contempt: the Church to which they are addressed is in a state of moral disorder: its worst offenders are hard and unrepentant. It does not seem easy, on the face of it, to believe that these chapters were written at the same time and sent by the same messenger as chapters i-ix. It is not impossible to believe it. St. Paul's was a strange and mysterious temperament, capable of abrupt transitions: it has often been said that he was in this respect not unlike Cromwell, whose letters and speeches afford examples of transitions as abrupt, perhaps, as this. But at least the letter called II Corinthians is less incomprehensible if we take these four chapters out, and accept the working hypothesis that they formed part of the sorrowful letter alluded to in II Corinthians ii. On that hypothesis this Corinthian correspondence closes on a note of thanksgiving and hope; and on any other it ends in an unresolved discord.

CHAPTER VII

THE FIRST TWO LETTERS TO CORINTH

FOLLOWING now the documents in the order in which we have placed them, let us try to understand their contents.

The decision of Gallio, that the quarrel between the orthodox Jews and those who accepted Jesus as Messiah was a matter of words and names and Jewish Law, and not one in which the Roman administration could properly intervene (Acts xviii, 14ff), secured the Christian Community from any interference on the part of the civil power. It had also the result of enabling Christians in Corinth to move about among their neighbours without fear or suspicion. They were not compelled, as Christians were after the time of Nero, to cut themselves off from all contact with Pagan life and its observances; they were not yet regarded, therefore, as un-social or anti-social. Now it is possible that this freedom was regarded by some Christians as an opportunity for exercising a good influence over their neighbours. But the logic of facts soon shewed that it had its dangers: it was far easier, then as now, to "be conformed to this world," to treat the essential novelty of the Christian standard as a matter of minor importance, to make amicable compromises and to be over-tolerant, than to stand firm in resistance to evil. It was natural, then, that uneasy questionings should arise in the minds of those Corinthians who knew that a line ought to be drawn, but did not know where to draw it. They therefore (as we have conjectured) sent to Ephesus to ask for

their founder's advice. We cannot tell whether they then asked what a Christian should do whose wife or husband was a Pagan. But apparently they did ask how far Christians should associate in ordinary life with those who regarded immorality as natural and normal. St. Paul's answer (II Cor. vi, 14ff) told them that they ought not to seek partnership of any kind with unbelievers: that the Church is a temple of the living God, and the Pagan world a temple of false gods; that there must be a clear separation between the two, and a strenuous avoidance of all defilement of flesh and spirit.

The Corinthians, however, appear to have found these directions too vague and, on one interpretation of them, too unpractical. Was it meant that they should have no dealings at all with people whom they knew to be doing what the Christian rule forbade? If so, they seem to have argued, they must build a high fence round the Church and live in their own city as aliens. The problem was a really hard one: and even St. Paul's wisdom could not solve it by a formula. In fact, it remained unsolved until the age of the persecutions forced a solution on the Church. Meanwhile, St. Paul contented himself with laying down one clear rule. It was impossible to say, "I will not eat or have any dealings with *anyone* who is a drunkard or an evil-liver": but it was possible to refuse even to eat with any *Christian* whose moral standard was definitely Pagan. Let the reader look at the list of sins in I Corinthians v, 11: it is instructive to see that the corruptions of business life are there regarded as equally deadly with fornication and idolatry. One can see from I Corinthians vii, 16, that St. Paul was not over-hopeful about the policy of living in close contact with Pagans in the hope of converting them. Yet he could not invent a rigid rule which would cover all cases, so he contented himself with laying down one which would at least help the Church to realize within its own circle the deep gulf between Christ and Belial.

Let the reader now turn to the last five verses of Acts xviii, and study what is there said of Apollos.

He was a learned Alexandrine, a deep student of the Old Testament; we must suppose him to have been, like other Alexandrians, a Platonist: one who was accustomed to look for reality far beneath the veil of appearances, and to discover hidden allegorical meanings, deep principles of truth, below the surface of the text of Scripture. Apparently he was a keen searcher, even before he received Christian baptism, for Messianic meanings in the Old Testament. This man, then, so trained, and led by Priscilla and Aquila to re-think all his principles in the light of the Church's faith, was sent by the Ephesian Church, with commendatory letters, to Corinth. St. Paul was absent from Ephesus at this time: otherwise, one might wonder whether he would have thought it wise to let loose a teacher of such fascination among Christians who had not as yet shewn themselves strong enough to resist the temptation of intellectual pride. However, to Corinth Apollos went: and the result of his going was a mixture of good and evil. Of good, because he did 'water' the seed that St. Paul had planted (I Cor. iii, 6): he did help those who honestly needed to find a stronger ground of reason for their faith: he also worked hard in a field from which St. Paul had very largely withdrawn, arguing with the Jews on their own ground and on the basis of their own Scriptures. Yet not of unmixed good: for people soon began to say that Apollos was a much more able philosopher than St. Paul: he was a man who could satisfy the educated intelligence; and after all, what one really wanted was *wisdom*, a philosophy; St. Paul's teaching, compared with his, was distressingly simple-minded,—he did not seem to have any philosophical system at all.

Thus, through the growth of personal prejudices, fostered by a sense of intellectual superiority to the herald of the plain Gospel, there arose, not exactly a schism, but a tendency to form a clique, centring round the name of Apollos.

At the same time other groupings of a partisan nature shewed themselves. Many of the Corinthian Church-people were born Jews: others, perhaps, were strongly inclined towards Judaism; and among these the opinion spread that St. Paul had gone too far along the road of liberalism, and that Peter, who did not indeed identify himself with the violent legalism of the Galatians, but had kept, perhaps by a compromise, more in line with the traditions of the mother-church of Jerusalem, was the safer apostle to follow. Inter-communication between the Churches was frequent enough, apparently, to allow adherents of the Petrine way of thinking to come to Corinth and intensify this feeling.[1]

We shall hear more of them later on. There appears also to have been a group—though perhaps the word 'group' is too definite—which, in order to assert its independence of St. Paul, took the name of Christ Himself as its watchword. It would seem, however, that this section merged itself in the general movement of Judaizing opposition to St. Paul, who, in II Corinthians x, 7 (part of the 'severe letter') asserts against *Judaizers* that he is as truly 'Christ's' as any of them.

This rapidly growing movement of disunion, reported at Ephesus by 'those of Chloe,' is the first subject with which St. Paul grapples in I Corinthians: and it occupies the whole of the first four chapters, which should be read consecutively with this problem in mind. They go to the root of the matter. The Gospel, St. Paul says, is not a set of philosophical principles, nor is it a heavenly portent such as the Jews expected: it is "Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God." It appeals

[1] The view that St. Peter himself had already visited Corinth has at present many strong supporters. But I am unable to adopt it. The terms in which St. Paul speaks of St. Peter in this letter (iii, 22) seem to me to make it very improbable indeed that he regarded him as a part-author of the Corinthian troubles.

to the simple: it gives no encouragement to human pride —pride of intellect or of position. Its power is the power of the Spirit: rightly then had it been proclaimed in Corinth without any parade of human cleverness. It leads on, if followed, to the highest wisdom, the wisdom which God through the Spirit reveals: but this wisdom is inaccessible except to those who through the Spirit have become spiritual (i, 17—ii, 16).

Such wisdom St. Paul could not have communicated to the Corinthians in the days of their infancy as Christians: even now, their factiousness shews that they are not fit for it (iii, 1-9).

The main effort of these chapters is to lift the mind of their readers (or rather hearers) to a level on which they will see the unworthiness of small personal preferences ("he that glorieth, let him glory *in the Lord*," i, 31) and understand that God's gift in Christ is a power which redeems us and not only a light which illuminates. But St. Paul could not drive his point home without writing about his own relation to his converts. He was forced into a defensive position, as though he were on his trial (iv, 3ff): he had therefore to insist that, as the Gospel is God's gift and the Church is God's building, so its ministers are only God's helpers and Christ's servants, responsible to the Lord alone. He utters a warning against the danger of building, on the one foundation, structures that will not stand the test of God's judgment, and so marring the Living Temple of God: a warning hint, that is, of the danger that the teaching from which the Corinthians derive most enjoyment may perhaps prove to be less sound than that which was given to them in the beginning: he adds a picture of the contrast (iv, 8ff) between the utter self-denial of an apostle's life and the complacency of the atmosphere at Corinth, where people are as unconscious of their defects as though they were already enthroned in the Messianic Kingdom; and the section closes with words of mingled sternness and love, leaving the Corinthians

to decide whether St. Paul's next visit to them shall be a happiness or a sorrow (iv, 14-21).

The reports from Corinth had brought word of two other causes of scandal: two members of the Church had gone to law with each other in a civil court: and there were serious cases of sexual immorality. In one of these a man had formed a *liaison* with his own stepmother, but this case did not stand alone. It even appears (from vi, 12) that there were some who claimed unfettered liberty in this matter, on the ground that "all things are lawful" to the Christian.[1] It was necessary to shew (vi, 1ff) how entirely the first of these scandals distorted the true relation of the Christ to the world, and to speak even more plainly about the second. Against the chief offender St. Paul commands that the whole Church should take disciplinary action; the whole body, remembering that St. Paul is present with them in spirit, is to "hand him over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh"; which cannot mean less than that St. Paul expected him to die suddenly as a result of their sentence. The broader principle of the maintenance of Christian chastity is upheld, once more, by lifting the whole matter to the highest level: the concluding words sum up the whole: "your body is a shrine of the Holy Spirit . . . ye are not your own, for ye were bought with a price: glorify God therefore in your body" (vi, 19-20).

We now come, in chapter vii, to the questions which had been actually sent to St. Paul by letter: and it should be remembered that all these matters would not have been submitted to the Apostle's judgment by the Church as a whole if the main body of Corinthian Christians had not been loyal at heart to their founder. Perplexing questions about marriage come first. Is it wise to marry at all? and if so, should Christians live together and have children,

[1] We may perhaps render this verse thus:—"All things are lawful to me," I hear you say; yes, all things are lawful, I admit, but not everything is expedient.

or are they called to an entirely exceptional way of life? And what is to be said of mixed marriages, i.e., those between Christians and non-Christians: or of the usage by which some unmarried Christians have arranged to live together under a vow of chastity? Is it sinful if such an expedient ends in marriage?

Some general principles underlying St. Paul's replies need to be noted. In the first place, a recorded word of our Lord has for him supreme authority (vii, 10), and where he can rely upon such authority he speaks without hesitation. But he is careful to let it be known when he is giving his own personal judgment: yet even then he claims that as "having the Spirit of God" he is entitled to be heard with respect (vii, 25). Thus he takes from our Lord, and enforces, the rule that marriage is indissoluble, and that remarriage after separation cannot be allowed: but on most of the social questions submitted to him he gives his own judgments. Next, his attitude to marriage problems is largely determined by two considerations. (1) The unmarried state, he has no doubt, is a higher vocation than that of the married. Those who marry are indeed bound by very high obligations of duty: but they are so much the less free to "care for the things of the Lord." This teaching has had a very great influence in the shaping of Christian history. We must remember on the one hand that there are sayings in the Gospel which correspond with it very closely; and, on the other, that St. Paul need not be expected, in a paragraph designed to meet a particular set of circumstances, to have said all that can be said on so great a matter. He was speaking of marriage as it then was, among Greeks: and the whole Christian conception of womanhood has had a long history since then, bringing into view ideals of love of which the Greek world knew nothing. Hence it is not true that all that is laid down in this chapter (e.g., the last half of verse 34) is of universal validity. (2) All that he says is written in the light of the conviction—shared then by all Christians—that the end

of the age was imminent. Since the coming of the 'necessity,' that is, the evil time which would precede the glorious end, was close at hand, and the time was shortened, it must surely be unwise to lay out the plan of life as though the world was destined to endure. Moreover, there was no condition of life which could not be consecrated. There was no reason why a man should find it intolerable to be a slave, or a Jew, or unmarried. It was best therefore on general grounds to remain in the state in which one was called, and to sit very loose to a world the outward order of which was even now passing away.

The latter part of chapter vii is given to the strange question of 'virgins': upon which St. Paul claims no special inspiration. According to our Authorized Version, St. Paul was only asked whether men should allow their daughters to marry; but it seems much more probable that the strange custom alluded to above (pp. 78, 88) had already established itself in Corinth, and that abnormal types of asceticism were as familiar there as abnormal instances of immorality. This custom was by no means unknown in later Church history; it constantly led to trouble, and the only wonder is that St. Paul handles it in this letter with such tolerant wisdom.

The next two chapters have to do with a question directly affecting the Gentile part of the Church more than the Jewish. Jews had then, as now, their own prescribed ways of killing meat, their own butchers. No Jew, therefore, would ever be in danger through the food he ate, of contamination with idolatry. But it was the Pagan custom to send the carcases of sacrificed animals to the ordinary market: moreover, there were common meals in the temples themselves, and entertainments at private houses which had something of a sacrificial character. For a Gentile, therefore, it was extremely hard to avoid eating 'things sacrificed'—unless he chose to live as a Jew or as a vegetarian.

The letter from Corinth to St. Paul seems to have shewn

him that this difficulty had arisen in various forms; housewives were perplexed about their shopping; their husbands did not know what line to take at dinner-parties: no one's conscience was quite easy. There were some, certainly, who took a high tone. We, they said, are enlightened people (viii, 1, 10, etc). We realize that Pagan gods are no gods; and one cannot be contaminated by what is non-existent. We feel free to do just as we like; the enlightened have authority to behave in an enlightened way. The effect of this sort of talk upon ordinary people was serious: it shocked some, and it encouraged others to make light of their scruples and stifle their consciences.

St. Paul, once more, has no codified rules to lay down, but he goes to the root of the matter and lifts it to a very high level. Enlightenment, he says, is more common than some people suppose. It is a dangerous gift: it may make us forget other people, less clever than we, who as our brothers have a claim to our consideration and our love. It is a bad thing to be broad-minded at the expense of other people's peace of mind (viii, 1-11). Some practical directions St. Paul does give, in the imperative mood. People are not to be over-scrupulous, either while shopping or when out at dinner; they should be ready to say 'no' to any dish of which they are positively told that it is sacrificial meat: and, the highest rule of all, whether they eat or drink, or whatever they do, they should do all to the glory of God (x, 23ff).[1]

[1] One of the unsolved problems of the Apostolic age is that of the relation between this Corinthian problem and the decision of the 'council' at Jerusalem (Acts xv). If that council laid down a general rule about eating things sacrificed to idols, how is it that St. Paul makes no reference to this decision? (1) Was the decree of the council only intended for the Christians of Syria and Cilicia? or (2) was it only intended to apply where difficulties arose between Jewish and Gentile Christians? In the latter case it may perhaps have been regarded as irrelevant at Corinth, where the trouble was not between Jew and Gentile but between Gentiles and their own consciences. Or again, (3) did St. Paul think of the decree simply as a decision against enforcing circumcision upon Gentile

The passages referred to so far are (apart from minor difficulties) plain enough; nor is the earlier part of chapter x very obscure. But chapter ix is very hard indeed. It would doubtless be plain if we had the Corinthians' letter before us, as St. Paul had. But if we, reading only St. Paul's answer, travel straight on from chapter viii to ix, 23, we find ourselves greatly bewildered. Why does St. Paul begin suddenly to speak of people who 'cross-examine him' (ix, 3)? Why does he go on to argue for the right of Apostles to be maintained by the Church and then turn round (in verse 15) to justify the fact that he has received no maintenance? But, above all, what has all this to do with the matter in hand?

I do not think that all these questions can be answered. We have here one of St. Paul's sudden transitions, the motive for which we can never know, because we do not know what challenge it was, the report of which had stung him so sharply and so suddenly. Yet it must surely have had some connection with the 'enlightened': there must have been some assertion that St. Paul's own behaviour was such as to justify theirs: and the whole matter must

converts, and did the circumstances of Gentile life in such a place as Corinth force him to ignore the rest of it?

Another answer (4) has some very eminent scholars as its supporters: namely that the Jerusalem decree had nothing to do with food: that according to the true text of Acts xv, (omitting "things strangled"), it was meant to prohibit idolatry, murder and marriage within the forbidden degrees of kinship; so that the trouble at Corinth was quite different from anything dealt with at Jerusalem. This is a tempting, but, as I think, a wrong answer. That difficulties arising from food-regulations did arise in the early days is clear from the New Testament (e.g. from Gal. ii 12, Rev. ii 14, and I Cor.): the earliest known reference to Acts xv (the letter of the Churches of Lugdunum and Vienna, 180 A.D.) also regards it as a rule about food: and, though it cannot be said that εἰδωλόθυτα never means "idolatry," nor αἷμα "murder," it is very improbable that the Apostles would have chosen words so far-fetched to express a meaning so simple.—It is best, I think, to recognise the fact that St. Paul was not a pedantic logician, and that it was his way to deal with circumstances as they arose: so that the solution numbered (3) above is likely to be fairly near the truth.

have had somehow or other to do with ' idol-meats,' for the argument, bewildering as it is, goes on without a break, past the end of chapter ix ; and when it emerges from the tunnel, so to say, it is still dealing with the same problems as are handled in chapter viii.

Now when St. Paul was at Corinth, he partly supported himself and partly relied on contributions from Macedonia. This fact, in some distorted shape long since forgotten, was always being brought up against him at Corinth (II Cor. xi, 7-11 ; xii, 13). Possibly it was maliciously said that St. Paul took no money because he knew that he was not a genuine apostle, and had not the face to demand an apostle's maintenance. Well, just conceivably the ' broad-minded ' may have traded on this slander so far as to say that it was useless to refer *them* to St. Paul's authority, since St. Paul had shewn by his own acts that he had no authority to act as an Apostle : therefore they would frequent the temples as much as they chose. This, if reported, would explain the outburst at the beginning of chapter ix ; and then the tangled thread will straighten itself out a little, thus :—" I *am* an Apostle, with full right to live of the Gospel, and with every claim to exercise that right in Corinth. The fact that I have deliberately refused to exercise that right is not due to any motives such as my challengers impute to me : I abstained for my work's sake alone. That work demands a single heart and a disciplined life, like that of the runner in the race-course. Like him—and you must all take him as a pattern—I have a plain goal to seek, definite opponents to beat : and that is why I try to live in voluntary hardship—' lest haply having preached to others, I myself should be rejected.' "

This analysis leaves the main difficulty of chapter ix unsolved, and that because the material for solving it does not exist. But it makes sufficient sense of the chapter to enable us to see how it leads straight on to what follows. St. Paul speaks of his own life of severity, and of the honourable fear which prompts it, and adds at once, " For I would

not have you ignorant, brethren " ;[1] he is going on, that is, to give reasons why the anxiety which keeps him in training ought also to be felt by those to whom he is writing. History shews, he says, that the sense of security and privilege is a very dangerous thing. ' Our fathers,' the Israel of the old covenant, were divinely guided, delivered and fed—so are we. They had, in the ' stricken rock ' from which they drank, a symbolic foretaste of the Christian eucharist—we have the Eucharist itself : yet the greater part of them fell away and were found unworthy : fornication, idolatry, the tempting of God—these things destroyed them. Why should we think ourselves any more secure than they ? " Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed, then, lest he fall " (x, 1-13).

The undercurrent of St. Paul's thought is clear. He does not feel that he can rightly command the Corinthians to abstain from sacrificial meat, or that he would be obeyed if he did so command. But he sees that some of them are far too well pleased with themselves, while the whole Church is in danger through over-confidence : it imagines that as the ' Israel of God ' it can have nothing to fear, and can afford to take any risks : whereas the danger of real idolatry is far nearer to them than they know. The peril is vividly presented in the abrupt appeal which begins in x, 15.

" I do not say (as the ' enlightened ' perhaps suppose) that there is anything real about an idol or the victim offered to it : but there is something real in the power behind the idol : it is a malignant spirit. Now to eat of a sacrifice is to have communion with the divinity concerned (as the example of Jewish usage shews) : and so to eat sacrificial meat in a temple is to have communion with demons. How can any of us do this and also claim to continue his participation in the body and blood[2] of

[1] A phrase of which St. Paul is rather fond. The word ' brethren ' is put in to give it a kindly tone : but it generally means " there is something which you really ought to know, but seem to have forgotten."

[2] I do not believe that there is any significance in the order

Christ? None of us can: unless we are just as rebellious and headstrong as the Israelites in the wilderness!" (x, 14-22).

The Corinthians in their letter had told St. Paul that they were trying to follow the guidance he had given them about matters of usage. But they had also asked him whether there was any reason for keeping up the (Hellenic) usage by which women wore veils over their heads during public worship.

St. Paul, in reply, points to a general consent of the Churches on this point, and supports that consent by arguments which it is not easy for us to appreciate. One verse in particular is obscure: what, we wonder, have the angels to do with the veiling of women (xi, 10)? Well, other allusions in this Epistle (iv, 9; vi, 3) should remind us that the thought of the angels had a prominent place in the mind of the earliest Christians; and it appears that here St. Paul is alluding to a tradition with which his hearers would be quite familiar, namely, the Rabbinical expansion of Genesis vi, in which the beauty of women is a cause of the fall of the angels or 'watchers.' I think that St. Paul's meaning is only that the old story which every one knows is reason enough why women should have their heads covered.[1] But it is strange to find him supporting a Greek custom by so peculiarly Hebraic an argument.

As the Corinthians were prone to parochialism, so within their own circle they were selfish and un-brotherly. It is

followed by St. Paul in this passage—"the cup . . . . the bread." It is clear from xi, 23ff, that in the Eucharists with which St. Paul was familiar the hallowing of the bread preceded that of the cup: and I would suggest that in x, 16 he mentions the cup first simply because his reference to Israel "drinking of the spiritual rock" is still half-present to his mind: and it is the parallel between the presumption of Israel and the dangerous conduct of some Christians that he is trying to bring out.

[1] The word 'authority' (not *a sign* of authority, as in R.V. text) in v. 10, is very odd. Wetstein doubtless gives the right clue: "she who covers her head . . . protects it and has it in her own power; she who unveils it, gives it over to the power of the evil angels."

possible that their letter to St. Paul went on to deal with various points relating to their meetings for fellowship, and especially to their behaviour at the Lord's supper. St. Paul deals with one of these points and leaves the rest to be set in order when he comes. The Corinthian Eucharist was profaned by two abuses—disunion and discourtesy: there was no realization of the unity of which the partaking of the 'one loaf' is the symbol, and no consideration shewn for the other Christians present; 'Everybody just gets his own supper.'[1] St. Paul even says that while some went hungry others were drunk. When we remember what he wrote in x, 16ff, we can understand his indignation. There was urgent need to dissociate the Eucharist from the surroundings of an ordinary meal. Some people think that Corinthian practice, and St. Paul's teaching, at this point, were seriously affected by the analogy of Greek mystery religions. In this connection it is interesting to note that the Corinthian contribution to the atmosphere of the Eucharistic gathering was just a callous and unreligious spirit and nothing more. They failed to realize that the Lord's supper was different from other meals: they did not see anything mysterious in it. St. Paul has to shew them that it means, and is, something really awe-ful. He has to remind them even of the traditional words which he himself heard at his first Eucharist, words which rehearse what our Lord did and said at the Last Supper; he has to tell them that we who enact that scene so often, and receive those gifts, are not free to think lightly of the gifts or of the action. There is nothing 'Hellenic' in what St. Paul says, any more than there was in the behaviour of the Corinthians. St. Paul just says what any decent Christian would say: he upholds the holy customs which he has known ever since his conversion, against an irreverence

[1] "Taketh *before other*" is probably a mistranslation: evidence from the papyri justifies us in thinking that προ- in προλαμβάνει is quite colourless.

which was rooted in nothing but selfishness and bad manners.

The next three chapters, xii-xiv, should be read continuously and in one stretch.

At the beginning of this letter (i, 5ff) St. Paul gives thanks that the Corinthians had been enriched by Jesus Christ in everything, in all utterance and in all knowledge, so that they came behind in no gift. But this very 'enrichment' had put its recipients to a harder test than they could stand. They had not learnt that it was wrong to be conceited about gifts which came from God and not from themselves (iv, 6f), and to think disparagingly of those to whom the Spirit had given other gifts than theirs. Troubles therefore had arisen which it was necessary to submit to the Apostle's judgment; quarrels about the relative value of the spiritual gifts themselves, and disorders connected with the employment of them in common worship, and, worst of all, a spirit contrary to the mind of Christ was abroad amongst them, a spirit which led men to "vaunt themselves, to be puffed up, and so to behave unseemly" (xiii, 4f).

The disputes thus created turned upon a comparison between three types of 'gift,' i.e., between prophecy, the gift of 'tongues,' and a less clearly definable endowment which enabled its possessors to do practical works of charity and administration. Was any of these definitely higher than the others? If so, was it right to look down upon the less highly endowed Christians? And, in any case, how should the prophets and the rest demean themselves in the Church? These questions in themselves would not have been very hard to answer: but they were complicated by the fact that the men of 'enlightenment' evidently claimed to speak of these matters from a superior level. That is why in chapter xiii, prophecies, tongues and knowledge are so markedly singled out (8-10) while 'practical activities' are not forgotten.

The beginning of St. Paul's answers is difficult (xii, 2f).

The construction is broken: but perhaps we may restore the sense thus: "You remember how as Pagans, you would go from one deity to another: and there was no law or over-ruling reason among them: Apollo might utter one oracle, and Zeus quite a different one. But as Christians you are within the realm of order: the revealing spirit is always true to Himself: He cannot inspire men to curse Jesus, nor can anyone own Jesus' Lordship except through the Spirit."[1]

Then St. Paul goes on, as always, to lift the problem to the highest level. We can see that much of it vanishes as soon as it is realized that the Spirit is one, and His gifts are very diverse, yet every Christian has a real share in them. But St. Paul felt that this would not be readily understood, so he reinforces it by a vivid parable of the body and the members, not unlike the famous parable of Menenius Agrippa (xii, 4-27).

Still, there was a real difficulty to face. St. Paul did set a higher value on some gifts than on others, and he had to make this clear without giving anyone the least excuse for personal pride. And so, while bidding the Corinthians to "desire earnestly the greater gifts" (xii, 31), he had to lift the argument to a still higher plane. This is achieved in the immortal chapter which is the hymn of love. That chapter should be read both in the Authorized and in the Revised Version: in the latter for accuracy's sake, and to remind oneself that 'charity' is not the exact equivalent of the Greek *agape*, and in the former because it is written there in language as glorious as that of St. Paul himself. The chapter is in a real sense a portrait of our Lord Jesus Christ: it is as though St. Paul, like the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, would have his readers 'look away' from this lower scene, with its all too human frailties, to

[1] It is worth while also to give a rival version of this passage. Dr. Zahn takes it to mean: "do not be afraid of the activity of the Spirit: His gifts will never make anyone denounce Jesus as accursed. And do not think that exceptional gifts are everything: the humblest Christian is also inspired to confess Jesus as Lord."

see in Jesus that which is perfect and eternal. It is a chapter in which not only the Corinthian problem, but every other difficulty between Christians finds its true solution. Learn it by heart, and you will have learnt something more than a lesson in early Church history.

When once St. Paul has set love, Christ's best gift and the image of His person, in its true place of supremacy, he can go on to shew how all subordinate things find their right proportion. The gift of 'tongues' was a strange thing: a mysterious disturbance of the depths of personality which led men to the involuntary utterance of things which the speakers could not understand: it was indeed balanced at times by another gift which enabled this or that hearer to interpret what had been uttered (xii, 10; xiv, 26ff); but although St. Paul recognised it as really spiritual, and claimed to possess it himself (xiv, 14, 18), he felt that its value was very limited. It was not an activity of the whole man, for it left the mind unexercised; it was not a blessing to the whole Church, for it left the hearers too often unedified: it was of no service in the missionary work of the body, for the outsider could not but regard it as a sign of mental disorder (xiv, 16, 23). How near St. Paul comes to summing up all this in a sentence of disapproval, the reader of I Cor. xiv will discover: but he should note that the sentence is left unspoken; the strange gift is allowed to retain its place as a domestic mystery of Church life, but only in close connection with other gifts which are of wider value to the individual or the Church (xiv, 15ff, 22, 27ff).

Prophecy, the inspired, intelligent declaration of revealed truth, is the higher gift which the believer should covet most: for it appeals to mind and conscience alike (xiv, 1, 5, 19, 24f, 39). Yet the use of this power needed practical regulation. St. Paul replied, to questions dealing with this point, that only two or three prophetic utterances should be allowed at any one time: while the exercise of the gift of tongues should never be allowed except when

some one possessed of the power to interpret was present, and then the same rule not to allow more than two or at the most three utterances should be enforced. As for the prophets, they were to observe an orderly relation to the Church and to one another; to the Church, for it was the province of the Church at large to 'discern,' i.e., to test and value, the things revealed through 'prophets'; and to one another, for no prophet was to go on speaking if a revelation was made to a fellow-prophet. One of the tests, indeed, of true Christian prophecy was that it was not ecstatic or uncontrollable.

In this way St. Paul hoped to put an end to the disorder reported to him, and to the excited scenes in which "psalms, revelations, tongues and interpretations" had been poured forth without restraint, in confused competition one against another.

He hoped also to put an end to scandals which had been caused through the appearance at Corinth of women who claimed the right to exercise gifts of utterance in public. Apparently this had happened nowhere else. St. Paul does not even dream of allowing that women might be as truly called and inspired as men: he utters one sharp sentence of prohibition, and asks the Corinthians whether they imagine that they are the only Church, or the mother-Church of Christendom.

He adds one significant word (verse 37), namely that any real prophet or spiritually gifted person will recognise, by means of his gift, how high is the sanction of all the instructions that have thus been given.

The chief problems submitted by the Corinthians have now been answered: there remains only a practical question which will be dealt with at the end of the letter. But among the matters reported to St. Paul at Ephesus there was one which seemed to him to be of the utmost gravity. Some of the Corinthians were saying that "there is no resurrection of the dead." It is with this denial that chapter xv is concerned. We have no means of knowing exactly

what the denial meant. It is commonly supposed that there was a group at Corinth, (influenced, perhaps, by 'allegorizing' tendencies fostered by the teaching of Apollos), which held firmly to a belief in the immortality of the soul, but regarded the common Christian belief in a bodily resurrection as only a crude way of safeguarding the soul's survival of bodily death. There may well be some truth in this supposition; but it will not help us greatly in following St. Paul's argument, for he gives not the least indication that his opponents held any positive teaching at all. On the contrary, everything that he says is based solely on the conviction that this Corinthian group was fatally disloyal to a fundamental element of the faith: and he is concerned only to prove that the Church's faith in a risen Lord, and its expectations of a risen life for all believers, are two inseparable parts of one indivisible creed. Whether justly or unjustly, he assumes that he is combatting an opinion which makes our faith futile, cuts away all hope of a real future life, and leaves us with no adequate reason for choosing a life of self-sacrifice rather than of self-indulgence.

Only a few traces can be discerned of the way in which the opponents' case had been argued. We can be sure that the phrase "the dead are not raised" was current among them (16): it is also probable that they asked how, after the total dissolution of the body, there could be any 'body' left to rise again; by what process it would be restored, and what its qualities would then be. Further, they would seem (50ff) to have said that St. Paul's teaching was materialistic: that he thought of the Kingdom of God as one into which 'flesh and blood' could enter. Perhaps verse 46, "that is not first which is spiritual," also contradicts an opinion of the opponents.

There was in all this, for St. Paul, no mere question of differing opinions which could be reconciled by lifting the dispute to a higher plane. Hence the tone of chapter xv is quite different from that of its predecessors. Here there

are no delicate adjustments, there is no diplomacy: it is a frontal attack, delivered with concentrated force. Nothing could exceed the weight of emphasis with which it opens. "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures: and he was buried: and he rose on the third day according to the scriptures: he was seen of many—even by me, the least of the Apostles. This is what I was taught at my baptism: this I taught you as the means of your salvation; you learnt it all; this is your standing-ground; if you have any faith worthy of the name, it is this that you hold. This is what I preach, and have preached; it is what all the Apostles proclaim. If this and nothing else is the Christian teaching, how can some of *you*[1] assert that there is no resurrection of the dead?"

This is the opening: it is followed by a vehement piece of dialectic, a logical reduction of the enemy to absurdity. "Once grant that Christ rose from the tomb, and you can never say that a rising from the tomb is impossible: or, if you say this, you annihilate our whole creed and all our hopes" (12-19). But St. Paul is too well skilled in his craft to remain long in this key. With masterful swiftness he passes to constructive statement: "Christ *is* risen: and His rising is a part of that whole age-long process by which the first failure of humanity is being redeemed, and a new manhood is arising from death, to receive its life from Him in due succession until the whole purpose is fulfilled, till death is annihilated, and even Christ's reign itself is merged in the final victory, and God is all in all" (verses 20-28).

Once again the logic becomes destructive (verses 29-34). "What is the use of a life of peril, of conflict, of daily acceptance of death?[2] If there is no resurrection, why

[1] The word is very emphatic. Over against the unanimity of the Apostolic preaching stands one little local group.

[2] Verse 29, which refers to "baptism for the dead," is omitted here, as being hard enough to require a note to itself,—(1) It is clear to me that there was a widespread custom in St. Paul's day by which Christians received a baptism which in some sense was

should I not enjoy to-day for what it is worth? That is the base conclusion to which your argument leads: beware of it, for it is a real peril: unworthy thoughts about God are abroad among you, and will infect your life if you are not watchful!"

But it is asked—we have supposed that the Corinthian opponents had raised the question, and St. Paul after his manner, imagines that he has the questioners confronting him—it is asked how the dead are raised, and with what kind of body they come? The question leads to another constructive statement (verses 35-49). The resurrection body is God's gift: in the rich variety of God's world 'body' exists in diverse forms, with a 'glory' proportioned to each sphere of being. The 'body that shall be' is related to that which now is as the seed sown is to the harvest realized—it is the same and not the same. There is a body which lives in this sphere of nature, the realm of flesh and blood: there is also a life in the spiritual sphere, and a body answering to that. 'Adam,' the father of fleshly humanity, is of the earth, in origin and nature: Christ, the 'last Adam,' the 'second Man,' is heavenly. We have borne the image of the one: we shall bear[1] the image of the other.

Lastly, it is not true that St. Paul thinks of the heavenly kingdom as a sphere in which 'flesh and blood' will persist. What he teaches is a profound truth of revelation: there

vicarious, and was undertaken for the benefit of others who had died unbaptized: a widespread custom, because St. Paul in no way suggests that he is speaking of something peculiar to Corinth. Traces of such a custom are found in heretical circles at a later period. (2) The argument implied in verse 29, rests upon the conception of baptism expressed in Rom. vi, 1-11: "we were buried with him through baptism into death, that like as Christ rose . . . so should we walk in newness of life: for if we have become united with him by the likeness of his death, we shall be also by the likeness of his resurrection." What is the use, it asks, of trying, by a vicarious baptism, to win for the dead a passage from death into life, a baptismal resurrection, if there is no possibility of a resurrection for anybody?"

[1] According to a very large group of ancient authorities this verb is subjunctive—"let us bear."

will come for us all,[1] whether we have 'fallen asleep' first or not, a moment of change in which this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality. Death and sin will be abolished through the power of Him who has robbed both of their power: in Him let us stand firm, doing His work in the conviction that it will not be frustrated, after all (verses 50-58).

In II Corinthians we shall meet with a passage in which some further light is thrown upon St. Paul's conception of the life in the world to come. In the chapter of which we have just tried to grasp the main threads he has been trying to raise a wall of defence against a danger which seemed to him to menace the faith of common men. We cannot tell precisely, as has already been said, what that danger was: nor is it easy to be certain about every part of St. Paul's defences. Large parts of them were taken from older structures: the imagery of the 'trumpet,' for instance, and much else that goes with it, belongs to the eschatology of later Judaism. But the central defence does not. It rests upon the unique fact which was the starting-point of Christianity, the fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ: and on the conviction that that fact has brought into the world a new hope, a hope which goes far beyond a mere belief in the soul's survival. As St. Paul's mind grew more and more mature, he held more and more loosely to the 'realism' of Jewish apocalyptic. He might have come to regard some of the details of his picture in I Corinthians xv as relatively unimportant. But from the conviction which is at the heart of it he could never have swerved; to have done so would have involved the complete collapse of the structure of his faith.

At the beginning of chapter xvi we meet with one last

[1] There is a bewildering variety of readings in v. 51: but the text to which we are accustomed has the best attestation, and the variants are mostly due to the variety of later Christian thought upon this whole subject.

question from the Corinthians' letter. St. Paul had already said something to them about a collection for the Church of Jerusalem. What were they to do about it?

This matter of the collection was not a casual project of benevolence. Its beginnings may apparently be traced back to the relief brought by St. Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem at the time of the famine (Acts xi, 27ff). From that time onwards the needy mother-church was constantly in St. Paul's mind.

St. James, St. Peter and St. John urged him to remember its necessities, but he needed no urging. He seems to have seen at once that to create in the Gentile Churches an unselfish interest in the mother-church would tend to keep the whole Church together, and to avert a division between its Jewish and Gentile elements: moreover, the Jewish Christians had always, as Jews, been accustomed to send regular contributions to the Temple at Jerusalem: this contribution, therefore, for the support of the 'living temple'[1] would provide a very natural substitute for the old Temple tax. Thus the collection assumes a greater importance than we should at first sight have expected: it becomes a powerful instrument for maintaining the peace and unity of the Church.

Directions on this matter which have already been given to the Galatians, who have returned to their old loyalty, are now sent to Corinth. There is to be a weekly putting aside of money on the Lord's Day, and when St. Paul comes to Corinth he will send the result to Jerusalem by approved messengers, with whom he will perhaps go himself. This is not the last that will be heard of these directions: offence was given by their form, for they were felt to be too dictatorial, and critics were not wanting who made the most of this.

[1] Notice what St. Paul says before Felix (Acts xxiv, 17): he speaks of the money brought for the Church at Jerusalem as alms and *offerings* made to his nation; the Church is the embodiment of the Jewish people, and gifts made to it are sacred gifts, oblations.

So the letter draws to an end: St. Paul's anxiety about the effect it might produce is evident. He is nervous about the possible reception of Timothy, who will perhaps reach Corinth later than the letter itself: he would have liked Apollos to go also: he hopes that the good influence of Christians like the household of Stephanas will be powerful. His fears were not baseless, as the sequel will show.

CHAPTER VIII

THE THIRD AND FOURTH LETTERS TO CORINTH

IT will be remembered that when I Corinthians was written St. Paul was intending to travel to Corinth by way of Macedonia (xvi, 4ff), and to stay in Corinth for some time, but that he was very doubtful about this visit, and feared that it might be a painful experience (iv, 19ff). But he was forced to change his plans more than once. In II Corinthians we find the record of one change: but the serious results which followed the reception of I Corinthians forced another upon him. We gather from II Corinthians xii, 14, that when that passage was written St. Paul was contemplating not a second but a *third* visit to Corinth, and from II Corinthians ii, 1ff that his second visit had been a distressing one, painful both to himself and to the Church. Where is this second visit to be placed in the sequence of events? It is most probable that it followed immediately upon the arrival at Ephesus of the disappointing news of the failure of I Corinthians. St. Paul could easily sail direct from Ephesus to Corinth, in the season of good weather, and this is apparently what he did, although St. Luke says nothing of it, preferring to be silent about troubles which there could be no motive for reviving. St. Paul, then, made a hasty journey to Corinth and back, vainly hoping that his actual presence might succeed where letters had failed. He returned to Ephesus almost broken-hearted: there was nothing left for him to do but to put out the whole strength of his authority and the whole passion of his love for the Corinthians in one more

letter. He wrote, therefore, "out of much affliction and anguish of heart, with many tears," a letter which was sure to give as much pain to its recipients as to its writer.

Part of this letter, though certainly not the whole of it, is to be found (on the hypothesis which we are following) in the last four chapters of II Corinthians, ending at xiii, 10. Those chapters should be read through now: and perhaps it will be as well to look afterwards at vii, 3-16, in order to feel vividly the utter difference between the mood of the later and that of the earlier chapters, i.e., between the third and fourth of St. Paul's letters to Corinth.

The third letter, as we have said, is not preserved entire. The surviving fragment omits what must have been its most personal and painful part.

When St. Paul paid his short and fruitless visit to Corinth, one of his more prominent opponents had treated him, it would seem, with shameful contumely. An offence was committed which could not be passed over: and in the third letter St. Paul insisted that disciplinary measures should be taken. But the Corinthian Church, which preserved so much of St. Paul's writing that was to the discredit of Corinth, did not preserve the sentences containing this bitter personal matter: we only learn about it from a studiously vague reference in the fourth letter (II Cor. ii, 5ff).

But though this episode is partially veiled, it is easy enough to see what St. Paul felt about his opponents, the kind of men they thought themselves to be and the kind of men that in his judgment they were: the things that they said about St. Paul and the counter-attacks which he felt it right to make. They were "Hebrews, Israelites, of the seed of Abraham" (xi, 22); they traded upon the purity of their Jewish birth in order to pose as the genuine prophets of God's Israel, and as faithful teachers of the Gospel which they accused St. Paul of corrupting. They had some measure of authority, probably from Jerusalem,

in virtue of which they could claim the name of 'apostle,' in that wider sense in which the term was applied to many others beside the twelve; and they asserted this apostolic dignity, disparaging that of St. Paul: so that he retorts upon them bitterly, calling them 'super-apostles' (xi, 5; xii, 11). They claimed that they were 'of Christ' while St. Paul was not: that is to say, they linked themselves up with that particular tendency towards schism which St. Paul had denounced in I Corinthians. With all this, they were neither silent about their own merits, nor slow to exact respect from others: they moved about in the sphere of St. Paul's labours with as much pride as if they and not he had done the pioneer work (x, 15). They had secured such a position in the Church that they were able to domineer over it, and to live lavishly at its expense: they had hypnotized it into unresisting acceptance of their oppressive ways (xi, 20). Yet they had no special Gospel of their own, no special gifts to communicate: they could perhaps corrupt the simplicity of those who listened to them, but that was all (xi, 2-4).

In relation to St. Paul himself, they acted as though any stick was good enough to beat him with: they made capital out of the old mean and graceless talk that had been made about his unwillingness to accept support from the Corinthians (xi, 7ff): they seized upon his constant changes of plan, and distorted them into a symptom of moral feebleness (x, 2): they pointed contemptuously at the difference between St. Paul on paper and St. Paul in the flesh—there was a man, they said, who counted for something when absent, but whose very appearance and poverty of utterance gave him away as soon as he shewed himself (x, 2, 10).

Such were St. Paul's opponents as he then saw them: and he sums them up as sham apostles, ministers of Satan masquerading as ministers of Christ (xi, 13ff), "whose end will be according to their works." The mischief which provoked so hot a flame of anger must have been pernicious

indeed, and it is just the touch of sheer meanness in it all which helps us to believe that St. Paul was not carried beyond the bounds of justice. But over and above this mischief there was other trouble: as well as strife, envy, backbiting and so on, there was uncleanness and shameless immorality, persistent and unrepented (xii, 20f.). Such was the situation when, as a last desperate resort, the third letter was written.

We have already picked out most of the points in it which relate to the enemy. The rest consists of St. Paul's passionate vindication of himself. It makes painful reading—all the more so because it is wrung from a keenly-sensitive soul, and is the self-assertion of a man who hated to talk about himself. An analysis of it is hardly necessary, and might be misleading; it is an outburst of passion, and the links of connection within it are only discernible if we try to realize the position and put ourselves in the writer's place. One word, or at times one mood, leads on to another: and the best way of following it is to read the chapters aloud, and so to act the scene over to oneself.

In chapter x, the main recurrent emotion springs from St. Paul's feeling of the distance which he has to bridge between himself and his hearers. It is true, he feels, that he cannot always sway an unsympathetic crowd when face to face with it (1): yet behind his personal weakness there is a reserve of real power and rightful authority, while his opponents are merely self-assertive, and that in another man's province (12-16), he has behind him the weight of a Divine commission, and sets before him only the hope of commendation from his Lord (13, 14, 17f). Chapter x, then, establishes contact with the enemy—and with alienated friends. After this, St. Paul would fain begin to assert himself: yet he at once breaks off (xi, 2-15) with a passionate asseveration of his right to assert himself, the right of one who has loved and suffered for Corinth (2, 7ff, 11), and cannot bear to see his work ruined by usurpers.

Then the torrent sweeps on unhindered: the Corinthians are tolerating much from men who have given little and served less; they must now bear to hear their Apostle tell the tale of his own sufferings for Christ, and even of the revelations of which God has counted him worthy. Yet he would rather speak of his infirmities, of the 'thorn in the flesh,' of the humiliations which drive him to take refuge in Christ's power; to 'glory' as he is now doing is madness; but who is to blame for this? Not St. Paul, but the Corinthians, who should have needed no reminder about things they knew so well (xi, 16—xii, 13).

Twice in these chapters (xi, 7-12; xii, 13-15) we meet with the wretched scandal that arose from St. Paul's refusal to accept maintenance at Corinth: and we see both how bitterly he felt its injustice and how firmly he resolved to disregard it in practice. "I kept and will keep myself from being a burden to you. . . . . I am coming a third time, and I will not burden you." Was it wrong, was it an insult, was it due to lack of love? The Corinthians might say this if they liked: but they should not say that it was a selfish policy pursued at their expense. Neither St. Paul, nor his messengers in the matter of the collection, could fall under that suspicion (xii, 13, 15-18).

So, then, St. Paul was ready to come a third time: not as a man on his defence, but as one who cared above all things for their true welfare, and therefore told them the truth: would he find, as there was reason to fear, a hard and unrepentant Church?

He would hold an enquiry, and the plain evidence would be produced. Let them remember what he had said at his last visit: there would be no lenience now, but they would discover in his sternness the proof of his commission and power. Meanwhile his one prayer was that they might be approved, not reprobate, perfected, not perverted, whatever might happen to himself. With a last warning reminder of the power which the Lord had given His ser-

vant, power to build, and if need be, to destroy, the fragment ends (xii, 14-19—xiii, 10).

The writing of the third letter must have coincided with the beginning of the troubles which brought St. Paul's long stay at Ephesus to an end, troubles which clearly involved St. Paul in far more suffering and danger than we should have guessed from the narrative in Acts (II Cor. i, 8ff). From Ephesus, after the scene in the theatre, St. Paul moved northward, and found that at Troas there was ample opportunity for effective mission work (ii, 12). But he was too wretched and restless to follow it up. Titus had gone to Corinth with the severe letter, and who could then foresee what its result might be? It might be as complete a failure as the visit which had preceded it: and if that were so, the whole structure of St. Paul's work in Achaia would collapse irretrievably. No news from Corinth could be hoped for except by a messenger returning by way of Thessalonica: it would be something, then, if the delay could be shortened by going to meet him in Macedonia. Even there St. Paul found no peace: his anxieties were unrelieved, and the Church was harassed by persecution (vii, 5).

Then, however, relief came, with a completeness that went far beyond his hopes. Titus returned from Corinth, with the news of an unreserved capitulation. The letter had done its work: it had reinstated St. Paul in the affections of the Corinthians, it had abased them into a genuine penitence. Eager to clear themselves and to cleanse their corporate life (vii, 11) they had punished the chief offender (ii, 5f), and had sent Titus back full of happiness and convinced that after all that they were worthy of St. Paul's faith in them (vii, 13ff). With a full heart of happiness, gratitude and confidence, St. Paul sends Titus back to them again with a last letter, and with some practical commissions. This fourth letter is preserved in II Corinthians i-ix, xiii, 11-14.

Let us try to make the general sense of this letter clear. "We have suffered greatly, you and I: but, God be praised, He sustains us and helps us to pass on His comfort to others. How near I was to death in Ephesus! Yet God was and will be our deliverer. Join your prayers and thanks with mine. What keeps my heart high is the knowledge that I did not, after all, devise according to the flesh (i, 17) in my relations to you. You know how I have had to change my plans: first there was the plan outlined in my second letter (I Cor. xvi, 5ff): then another plan for a direct voyage to you, and a visit as happy as my first: finally I had to go back to the first idea. Do not think that this was mere instability: there is nothing unstable in the Gospel which I preach. The real reason for delays and changes was my resolve that my third visit should be happier than the second: the resolve which made me write my third letter in so severe a tone, not just for the sake of hurting you, but to shew how much I care for you all (i, 3—ii, 4).

As for the wrong done, it was done to you as much as to me. You have inflicted a penalty: now let there be a complete reconciliation, and let it come from me as well as from you (ii, 5-11).

I cannot but recall the anxiety with which I waited for Titus, and could not bear to wait so far away as in Troas. But let us thank God, who takes His own glorious way with us, using us as the instruments by which He reveals Himself, expecting us to speak His word, and not to trade upon it, as some are doing (do not think I am going to 'glory' once more: there are those who need letters of commendation to you, but I have you yourselves as a living testimonial); let us trust God and not ourselves. He enables us to be ministers of the new Covenant; in its abiding glory the transitory glory of the old fades away; that ancient glory shone from Moses' face, but was veiled —and veiled it still is, except for us who discern that in Christ it is done away, and so behold, unveiled, the

glory which transforms us into His image (ii, 12—iii, 18).

As ministers of this revelation it is for us to come out into the light and make the truth plain; for plain it is, except to those who are sightless through unbelief (iv, 1-6). And what if our light, like Gideon's torches, is carried in 'frail earthen vessels'? Difficulty, persecution, defeat, may be our lot, but in this 'dying life' our faith in Him who raised up the Lord Jesus preserves us from despair (iv, 7-15). Inwardly we are renewed from day to day: trouble is a light thing to those who see the infinite glory before them, and know that the things unseen are eternal; eternal, for an enduring home is already prepared for us, a tabernacle in which the soul will be clothed when it has put off this earthly dress. We have already the gift of the Spirit to assure us of this; our true home is above, and our heart is there; meanwhile we must live as men who have a judgment to face; and in rightful fear we must go on with our work of teaching (iv, 16—v, 10). To God we are fully known, and you—though I would not dwell on this—know us also: but there are still those of whose self-praise you need to beware; therefore remember that our impulses come from God's call and your need alone, and our mind is set on the life which Christ died to win for us all: on the 'new creation,' on the redeeming work of which God has made us the messengers. We have no merely human thoughts of anyone, not even of Christ himself. We are simply His spokesmen, imploring you to accept peace through Him, and not to receive God's grace in vain; to avoid all that could bring discredit on the Gospel, and with us to persevere in manifold endurance, as we walk in all ways of goodness, aided and armed by God, turning every form of defeat into victory" (v, 11—vi, 2).

Chapter vi, 3-10, is difficult: St. Paul begins by speaking of what he expects of the Corinthians, and passes insensibly into a glowing picture of the spirit in which he (and Timothy) are trying to do their work.

"Let us, who are so unreserved towards you, find you as

generous toward us: we can ask this without embarrassment, now that the sky is so clear[1] (vi, 11-13; vii, 2f).

The anxiously-expected news which Titus brought has given me new strength: it was worth while to have to write as I did, since it has brought you through pain to effective repentance, and your reception of Titus himself only adds to my confidence in you" (vii, 5—end).

So the letter runs, in its first seven chapters, modulating from theme to theme, and not always in a major key; never travelling far from the thought of St. Paul's work and commission, not often rising to great elevations, and yet full, as a whole, of genuine thankfulness.

The last two chapters are concerned with arrangements for the collection for the saints. It will be remembered that a Corinthian contribution had been suggested before I Corinthians was written: that directions, thought by some to be too dictatorial, were given in that letter; and that before the writing of the 'severe letter' Titus and a brother had already visited Corinth and made a beginning of active preparations (viii, 6). Writing now from Macedonia, St. Paul cannot conceal the fact that without any pressure at all the Macedonian Christians have already collected an astonishingly generous gift: and since he has let it be known there, with good effect, that the Achaian Churches have started their preparations a year ago (ix, 1f), he is anxious that the collection shall now be completed, and that it shall be liberal. At the same time he wishes to avoid all appearance of dictation (viii, 8-10); and he wishes the Corinthians to feel that they are debtors to the Church of Jerusalem, which is rich in other gifts but not in money (viii, 13ff), and that the sending of the gift will be a rightful recognition of the common tie which binds Corinth to Jerusalem and to all the Churches (ix, 13). He is[2]

[1] We omit at this point vi, 14—vii, 1, which we decided above (p. 77) to regard as a fragment of St. Paul's first letter to Corinth.

[2] In viii, 18, 22, both A.V. and R.V. translate the Greek aorist ἐπέμψαμεν *'we have sent.'* But it was the custom for Greek and

therefore putting the conduct of the matter into the hands of three representatives: Titus is one of them, the second is "the brother whose praise in the Gospel is heard throughout all the Churches," a brother who had at an earlier stage been commissioned by the Churches of Judæa to travel with St. Paul for this very purpose, and the third is a tried and tested friend. Both of the latter are described as "apostles of Churches," and St. Paul is careful to hint that the good name of Corinthian Christendom depends on the spirit in which they are received. The two chapters viii and ix, are intended to smooth their path, and with the indications given above will be found easy to follow. But the reader should not fail to notice the delicate tact with which the whole situation is handled. It is not easy to induce people to be spontaneous and whole-hearted in acting upon suggestions which do not originate with themselves. St. Paul might conceivably have said, "you must really get something done now, if you want to save your face"; but instead of this he suggests a dozen good reasons why the Corinthians should act with happy alacrity, and think themselves fortunate to have so good a piece of work to do.

Latin letter-writers to use a past tense when referring to what they were doing and thinking at the time of writing; thus where we should say, 'I enclose a cheque,' they would have said, 'I *enclosed* a cheque.' The reason for this was that the recipient would view the action as past—'my correspondent enclosed a cheque when he was writing'—and the writer suited his tenses to the recipient's point of view. Probably the right English equivalent of ἐπέμψαμεν in 18 and 22 is, '*I am sending*,' and of ἡγησάμην in ix, 5, '*I think*.' Other instances of this usage are found, e.g., in Acts xxiii, 30; Eph. vi, 22; Phil. ii, 28; Col. iv, 8; Gal. vi, 11 (compare R.V. with A.V.).

CHAPTER IX

THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

IN speaking about the Corinthian letters we had to begin with a summary account of difficulties connected with the documents, and of the part played by the Corinthians themselves in the correspondence. The Epistle to the Romans does not involve us to the same extent in this sort of discussion, yet even here there are certain puzzles of which we must take account.

It is perplexing, for instance, to find that there were extremely ancient copies of the Epistle in which the word *Rome* was not mentioned at all, and copies from which the last two chapters were entirely absent, or represented only by the final doxology. It is perplexing also to notice that the greetings in chapter xvi seem more easily to connect themselves with the Church of Ephesus than with that of Rome; at any rate it is strange to find Prisca and Aquila among them, when we know how very short a time before the writing of Romans they were settled in Ephesus: strange, too, to find mention of Epænetus, "the first fruits of *Asia*." Prisca and Aquila, no doubt, were Roman Christians to begin with, and since we hear of them at Corinth and Ephesus, it is obvious that they moved easily from place to place, so that there is no very great difficulty in supposing that they moved a third time, and, after the riot in the temple, left Ephesus for their original home. Yet on the face of it, their presence in Rome, as settled inhabitants whose house is a regular place of meeting for Christians, has a touch of improbability in

it; and this improbability is increased by the mention of the Asiatic Epænetus. So far, therefore, and without attempting to weigh the probability of the other names being Roman, there seems to be a case for connecting chapter xvi with Ephesus rather than with Rome.

On the other hand, though the ancient omissions of *in Rome* and of the concluding chapters are very puzzling, and raise questions which no one as yet has succeeded in solving, they need not affect our reading of the Epistle in the slightest degree. All that we can say of them is that they point to the existence, in very early days, of a shorter edition of this Epistle which had the character of a 'circular letter,' capable of being sent to, or read in, any Church. Whether this edition was prepared by St. Paul himself, or only came into existence when the Epistles were being formed into a collection, it is impossible to say. There is just a hint of a possible explanation in I Corinthians i, 2. We read there that the letter is addressed not only to the Corinthians, but also to "all those who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place." Now the Corinthian letter is in fact peculiarly local: and it has been suggested that the words which attribute to it a wider intention were added when the Pauline letters were collected, so as to give the letter a wider interest. Now we may allow ourselves to conjecture that something of the same sort happened to Romans; that the name of Rome was taken out from just the same kind of motive, and that this is the explanation of the absence of a place-name both in Romans i, 7, 15, and in Ephesians i, 1.[1]

In any case, it so happens that the absence or subtraction

[1] If all the letters had originally indications of the time and place of writing, and these were removed at that time when the collection was formed, this would be another and a parallel case of the editor's tendency to get rid of local and temporal references. The *collected* letters were meant for general use and edification, as expositions of the apostolic faith: with this purpose in view it was natural that some, at least, of the traces of their origin, as evoked by particular circumstances in particular places, should be removed as irrelevant.

of the word *Rome* makes very little difference. It was impossible for anyone, without re-writing the greater part of Romans i, to cut out the local reference in it. Read chapter i through, making the necessary omissions, and you will still find St. Paul writing, not to the Church at large, but to a definite body of Christians, whom he has never seen, and whom he is anxious to see and has tried in vain to visit; and when you connect all this with the references in xv 22ff, you will feel that chapter i, after all, with or without the name, is in fact no part of a circular letter, but is clearly addressed to the Roman and to no other Church. You may therefore be inclined to infer that the omission of *in Rome*, however ancient, is not original, and is not due to St. Paul himself, but is a clumsy attempt to remove the local character which properly belongs to the Epistle; and this inference may possibly be right.

As for the ancient omission of chapter xv, we need take no account of this, for the chapter is so closely linked with xiv that there is no natural break between them, and indeed no one doubts that xv is St. Paul's own work, and formed part of the actual letter which was sent to Rome.

If, for the moment, we leave on one side the doubt about chapter xvi also, we find that the Epistle tells us clearly enough at what time and in what circumstances it was written. St. Paul is at Corinth, as is plain from the references to Gaius (xvi, 23: I Cor. i, 14), to Erastus the city-treasurer, and to Phœbe the deaconess of the neighbouring Church of Cenchreæ. He has just completed the business of the collection for the saints at Jerusalem, and is about to make his way back to Jerusalem, taking with him the gifts of the Macedonian and Achæan Churches (xv, 25ff). His work in Corinth is done (23): and with it a wide range of activity is completed, reaching from Jerusalem to the eastern shores of the Adriatic (19). The way seems now to be open for a great westward movement. From Jerusalem St. Paul is hoping to travel first to

Rome, and then—presumably by way of Southern Gaul—into Spain.

He has long wanted and often planned to come to Rome, and to preach the Gospel there: but his mission work among the Gentiles, in which he has always tried to break new ground (xv, 21) has hindered him hitherto.

Now, however, the obstacles are removed; this letter announces their removal, and one of its purposes is to prepare the way for a personal visit.

There remains one other introductory question. What sort of a Church was it to which this letter was addressed? This question is rather important, because our interpretation of the general run of the argument depends on the way in which it is answered.

Christianity in Rome was by this time no longer in its infancy. When Priscilla and Aquila came to Corinth from Rome in A.D. 49-50, they came as Christians: and there is good reason for thinking that the edict of Claudius commanding all Jews to depart from Italy (Acts xviii, 2) was due to troubles provoked within the Jewish community in Rome by the Christian propaganda.[1] If this is correct, then there had been Christians, and active Christians in Rome for at least seven or eight years before St. Paul wrote his letter: moreover, these Christians had proclaimed their message with sufficient energy to cause a definite breach between Church and Synagogue. The result of that breach had been to involve the Jewish community as such, and not merely the Christian section, in difficulties with the police: and in this issue, orthodox Jews and Jewish adherents of Jesus of Nazareth had alike been forced to leave the city. But it is probable that the expulsion of Jews was not carried out with numerical strictness, and it is also quite possible that there were a certain number of Gentiles among the earliest members of the Roman Church: for

[1] Cf. Suetonius, *Claud*, 25. Iudæos impulsore Chresto assidue tumultuantes Roma expulit.

we must suppose that, as elsewhere, so also at Rome, it was the admission of Gentiles that first led to serious dissensions between the followers of Jesus and the authorities of the synagogue.

How the preaching of the name of Jesus first came to Rome, we do not know. Everything came to Rome in those days, for travelling and inter-communication were incessant, and all roads led to the City. If we conjecture that the Gospel came from Antioch, and was disseminated at first by people of no great personal eminence, we shall at least be doing no violence to known facts. All that we can learn from St. Paul is that *he* did not found the Roman Church. It is tempting, no doubt, to ascribe its origin to St. Peter; there are those who think that when St. Luke speaks of Peter as escaping from Jerusalem to 'another place' (Acts xii, 17) he means that he went to Rome. I do not myself think that the tone of Romans tells in favour of this view: the Epistle does not seem to me to read as if it were addressed to a Church known by the writer to be the creation of the leading Apostle; and, further, the answer to the question we are now considering tells strongly, as I believe, against it.

For although the Roman Church must have begun, as all mission churches did, with the Synagogue, I believe it is quite wrong to think of it as being, at the time when St. Paul wrote, a predominantly Hebraic Church. It is inherently probable that the Jewish element within it was very much weakened by the effects of the edict of Claudius: but apart from that consideration we have the concrete fact that St. Paul treats it again and again as a Gentile Church; by which I do not mean one in which there were no Jews or only a few, but one which was characteristically Gentile, as having its doors wide open to non-Jews, and a definitely Gentile orbit, so to say, of missionary work.

It is indeed quite inconceivable that St. Paul should have written xv, 15 to a community in which the Jewish

element was predominant: "I write the more boldly to you . . . . as putting you in remembrance, because of the grace that was given me by God, that I should be a minister of Christ Jesus *to the Gentiles*, ministering the Gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be made acceptable." And the same thing is true of i, 5, 6—"through whom we received grace and apostolic commission unto obedience of faith *among all the Gentiles* . . . . among whom are ye also," and of i, 14f.—"I am debtor both to Greeks and to Barbarians, both to wise and foolish: so as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the Gospel also to you." When we read these verses, remembering that St. Peter's commission was definitely to the circumcision, I think we may feel certain that they cannot have been addressed to a Petrine Church. Yet they are commonly overlooked, or not allowed sufficient weight. The reason for this is that the general argument of Romans has seemed to presuppose a strongly Jewish circle of readers or hearers, and the rather inexorable *data* of the passages quoted above have therefore been twisted or eluded so as to fit in with that supposed requirement.

The passages which have given most colour to this procedure are two: in iv, 1, St. Paul speaks of Abraham as "our forefather according to the flesh": and in xi, 13, he says, "but I speak to you the Gentiles." From the first of these places it has been inferred that St. Paul must have been addressing men of Jewish birth, and from the second that he is at this point turning from the Jewish to the Gentile members of the Roman Church. Now I feel sure that both these inferences are wrong. (1) Let it be remembered how St. Paul spoke of "all our fathers" to the very Gentile Corinthians (I Cor. x, 1). The 'fathers' are the Jews of Moses' time, and they are called 'fathers' of the Gentile Corinthians because the Catholic Church which includes Gentiles is, to St. Paul's mind, the true Israel of God. And in Romans iv, St. Paul clearly explains what he means by the fatherhood of Abraham: it is the

relation of Abraham to 'us all,' to the whole Church (16), the fulfilment of the promise that he should be the 'father a many nations' (ἐθνῶν, the word which in other contexts we translate 'Gentiles'). (2) Romans xi, 13, is commonly translated as though it meant 'now I am going to talk to you Gentiles.' But it need not mean this at all. It may quite well mean, 'I am talking all this time to Gentiles,' or, 'the point of all that I have been saying is of special importance for you, my Gentile readers'; and there is no real reason for thinking that the chapters which precede are specially meant for readers of Jewish blood; on the contrary, the believing Jews, the 'remnant' elected by grace, are alluded to in the third person and not addressed directly (xi, 4, 5).

As far, then, as these two passages are concerned, we are by no means compelled to think that the Roman Church was predominantly Jewish, or that the major part of the Epistle is addressed to one section of it, only a small fragment having reference to the Gentile converts. I suggest then that it should be read through on the supposition that all of it is addressed to the whole Church, and that that Church is regarded by St. Paul as a great 'Gentile' Church, in the inclusive sense described above.

It has been said already that all this has a bearing upon the way in which we understand the Epistle. On the view which is here rejected, the greater part of it is an attempt to propitiate the minds of Jewish-born Christians by proving to them that St. Paul's teaching was not so dangerous as his detractors alleged it to be: while to this is appended a short section which balances matters by asking the small body of Gentile believers not to presume too far on the exceptional privileges which God has granted them. But on the contrary view, which is adopted here, the letter has very little that is defensive about it; in the main it is an attempt to solve the problem presented by the existence of a Catholic Church,—the direct and rightful heir of the Church of the old Covenant—from which all

but a few of the ancient people of God are by their own choice excluded. The letter assumes that in that Church there is room for Greek and Jew alike, but that the claim of the Jew is the prior claim; its business is to try and make it clear what that prior claim means and how it is compatible with the wider outlook of the Gospel upon all mankind. It is not written, like the Galatian letter, to deal a decisive blow in a conflict undecided as yet: nor, like the Corinthian letters, to find the highest possible way out of certain distressing situations; if it has any practical aim, it is the aim of enabling men to think worthy thoughts about a deep mystery of religion, and to believe intelligently both in the Catholic Church of the present and in that of the past, the Church of the New Covenant and of the Old. It is the first great Christian attempt to "justify the ways of God to men," and to discover a meaning and a sequence in the history of revelation.

In sending this letter or treatise to the Roman Church, St. Paul's first motive was not that of self-defence. He had indeed to guard himself from being misunderstood, and from the revival of old misunderstandings: but this was not his primary aim. He was hoping soon to visit the Christians of the greatest city in the world: hoping, too, that he might now find himself at the beginning of a great missionary campaign in the West. What was more natural than that at this great turning-point he should wish to think out the fundamental issues of his warfare, and proclaim, at the outset of his western work, that vision of its meaning which he had now attained?

A Greek critic,[1] comparing the Iliad with the Odyssey, likens the former to the midday and the latter to the setting sun—'there is the same splendour but not the same intensity.' Of the difference between Galatians and Romans something not entirely dissimilar may be said. The latter does not deal quite with the same theses as the earlier letter, nor does it approach them from the same

[1] The Author of the *Περὶ Ὕψους*.

angle. The purpose of Galatians is practical—to make the enforcement of the Law upon Gentile Christians impossible, and to give good reasons for doing so. Romans assumes the practical purpose of Galatians as having been already achieved, and works out a scheme of thought in which that achievement can find its final justification. There is the same splendour, there is even a greater splendour, but there is not the same stress, not the same intensity.

Let us now try to follow the main threads of the argument. Notice first the wonderful art with which the main theme is approached. The Epistle opens like a symphony. There are a few bars of introduction, and the last of these bars leads irresistibly into the chief subject—what is the Gospel? "The Gospel is the saving power of God to all believers, the revelation of righteousness of God which faith alone can receive (i, 8-17).

Salvation and righteousness are the world's need. In the Gentile world the light of natural religion shines without avail: knowledge and wisdom are there, yet they have led only to the utter downfall of religion and character alike. The Gentile conscience may condemn these corruptions, yet in practice it acquiesces in them; while the judgment of God waits impartially upon all, Jew and Gentile alike, equally ready to condemn those who know the law and do it not, and to acquit those who do God's will without even knowing of the law that they unconsciously keep (i, 18—ii, 16).

As for the pride of the Jew, it is baseless: it could only be justified if he lived according to the light that is given him; but he does not. The true Israelite is often found outside Jewry altogether: in God's sight the mere outward fact of circumcision is nothing, and only the inward conformity of the heart to His will is of any value (ii, 17-29).

Why, then, is it a privilege to be a Jew at all? Was there any value in the institutions of the old covenant? Yes; for this was the sphere in which God did reveal Himself.

God is true to Himself, however much men fail Him. Let us not entangle ourselves in sophistry, or think that our wickedness is only the foil to God's goodness, that God has no right to judge us, that we may as well sin anyhow, if good is to come out of it in the end; such sophistry has been attributed to me, but I abhor it (iii, 1-8).

To come back to our question: perhaps it is even worse to be a Jew than a Gentile? No: for sin is universal, and puts all mankind on an equality. The law utters the sentence against sin which impeaches every man: and it serves only to reveal, not to conquer, the sin which it condemns; but the Old Testament looked forward to another revelation which has now come to pass: it is the revelation that everyone who has faith may through Jesus Christ have God's gift of righteousness—everyone, without distinction, may have it, not because of what he does, but because of what Christ has done for him. If it has seemed that God's judgment has slumbered, it is now vindicated: the offering of Jesus' life, as the cost of our redemption, has made plain both God's righteous estimate of evil and His willingness to 'justify' those who believe in Jesus. Neither Jew nor Gentile, then, has any ground for pride; faith alone can bring us to a right standing with God (iii, 9-31).

Yet the story of Abraham seems to contradict us here: at first sight it looks as if God rewarded him for his *actions*. But look further, and you will see that this is wrong. His acceptance with God did not spring from what he did, in being circumcised, but from the faith with which he believed God: it was that faith that was counted to him for righteousness, and that faith preceded anything that he did. He is therefore the type of the believer, of the circumcision of the heart; he is the father of the faithful—we in Christ's Church are the 'many nations' of his children (iv, 1-25).

Since, then, it is through faith that we are set right with God, let us have peace with God, through Christ, and let our only pride be in the hope of His glory. That hope

ought to carry us through everything—so overwhelming is the love of God on which it rests. The love that has given Christ to die for us, who were not worth dying for, will go on to do more for us than this: Christ dwelling in us will be our salvation: and in this we have a real ground for glorying (v, 1-11).

For a very wonderful thing has happened: something that reverses all the effects of the first sin of the first man, and does more than this as well. Sin and death began with Adam, life and righteousness with Christ; but Christ is far more than the undoer of the deed of Adam: He is the bringer in of a glorious reign in life, through grace, for all believers (v, 12-21).

Perhaps you wonder how we are going to get on without the Law. Well, the reign of the Law was only an episode; we can even say that Law increased sin, so accusingly did it bring it to light; but God's grace is far stronger than the Law was, and its reign brings in life eternal. Freed from the Law, shall we be foolish enough to think that the more we sin, the more opportunity there will be for grace? Of course not. The all-sufficing substitute for the Law is the new life given us in Christ, the life into which we rise with Him at our baptism. In this life sin must not be our King and Lord; we who are under grace, not under Law, have changed our allegiance entirely, and become God's slaves, the bond-servants of righteousness, we who once were enslaved to sin (vi, 1-23).

Or, to put it in another way, we once belonged to sin and law as a wife belongs to her husband. But death puts an end to that bond, in ordinary law: so, in the law of the spiritual world, we have ceased to be 'wedded' to law; we have died to it all in the death of Christ, and are now free to begin a new and fruitful life of good deeds in union with Him (vii, 1-6).

It is hard for me to avoid the appearance of identifying the Law with sin. Let me therefore shew more clearly what I mean. When we are told not to do a thing, there is

an impulse in us which simply makes us want to do it because it is forbidden. I remember a time when I lived unchecked by law, and how, when I first became aware of all that I was forbidden to do, sin gained at once a deadly hold on me. The precepts of the Law were wholly good, but sin has the awful power of utilizing law for its own ends. This leads, and has led in my experience, to a terrible division of a man against himself—the complete state of war between the ideal which one knows one ought to follow and the evil to which one's lower self consents. There is no misery worse than this; but I know that I have been delivered from it, through Jesus Christ our Lord: that I am free, through the law of the Spirit, from the law of sin and death. God has annulled the claim of sin to be our master, by sending His Son into our sinful world of flesh; His victory over sin in our nature makes possible for us what under Law we could never do—we can live under the leading of the Spirit, not under that of the flesh, and so we can fulfil what the Law demanded in vain. Flesh and Spirit—those words express an eternal contrast: on the one side is death and enmity to God, on the other, life and peace. To have the Spirit of Christ—that is what being a Christian means: it means to be dead to the appeal of the flesh and alive to the appeal of goodness; and, more than this, it means to have the hope of a new life quickening even our mortal bodies in the resurrection (vii, 7—viii, 11).

It follows, then, that the highest possible obligations are laid upon us (we are not free to live as we like, just because we are under grace). We are under the leading of God's Spirit, we are His sons, adopted into His true family, The Spirit corroborates all that our own heart tells us about ourselves: that we are God's children with a glorious inheritance before us. It is worth while to bear the heavy load of the present for the sake of that future: now, a cloud of futility hangs over the whole creation: nothing is yet what it is to be in the coming glory—not even we ourselves are free from the pangs of expectation. Yet we

have a measure at least of the Spirit, which keeps our hopes alive, and co-operates with us in our desire to pray, and indeed prays on our behalf when we can find no words to utter. We can be sure that in the end all will be well: God has done the utmost for us, and He will not suffer His work to come to nothing (viii, 12-39).[1]

Yet the thought of all the glorious certainty that is ours turns my thoughts again to those to whom the adoption and the glory and the covenants belong—my own kinsmen. I would forfeit my own place in Christ for their sake. Yet I am sure that what God has spoken cannot fail. Israel is God's people: but the Israel of God's promises is not the same thing as the Israel of history. The words spoken to Abraham, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called," have a mystical meaning, namely, that Abraham's 'children' are the 'children of the promise' only—Ishmael is left out. In the same way Esau is left out and Jacob is chosen; it would seem that God always works by calling and choosing whom He will; He has mercy on whom He will have mercy, but hardens the heart of Pharaoh. Nor have we any right to question His choices: the clay has no right to question the potter's judgment. And in fact God's selective judgment works in two ways: not all Israel is saved; time and again, indeed, the faithful have been reduced to a mere remnant: yet on the other hand God has called other nations into His family, as He foretold through the prophets that He would do: the Gentiles have found the road of faith, and Israel as a whole has missed it (ix, 1-33).

I pray indeed that they may find it, and all the more so because they do desire God's righteousness, in spite of their refusal to take God's way of attaining it. They are so anxious to win the reward of life by carrying out the legal precepts that they fail to see how far simpler the Gospel is: it asks only for a word, the word of faith—"Jesus is Lord, Jesus is risen!"[2] From Jew and Gentile alike nothing

[1] Of the passage viii, 28-39, no paraphrase can be attempted without sacrilege.

[2] For the use of Deut. xxx, 11ff, in this passage see pp. 33, 38, above.

more is asked; and the Jews have had every chance of hearing the good news, but they have rejected it; all the worst things that the prophets said about their hardness of heart, and about the better reception of the Gospel outside Judaism, have come true (x, 1-21).

Yet never can I believe that Israel has been rejected. The story of Elijah warns me against this; and as in his day, so now there is a 'chosen remnant'; the main body has failed, in accordance with some terrible words of Scripture. And yet even in their failure one can see the hand of God—for it has made the gathering-in of the Gentiles possible; and if that is a glorious thing, how much more glorious it will be when Israel also finds its way to Christ (xi, 1-12)!

My work lies among Gentiles: I put its claims very high, because I can never forget my hope that the Gentile mission may be made a blessing to the Jews. Israel is like the great olive tree of God's grace. Many of its branches have been cut away, and the Gentiles, like branches of wild olive, have been grafted into their place. Never forget that the old tree was there first, and that God can graft in the lost branches again; and in my heart I believe that He will do this. You must therefore avoid all presumptuousness. God's ways are profound. Let us think of the blindness of the Jews as permitted for a time, and destined to end when the Gentile world is fully brought in. So we shall see that their disbelief is the occasion of your salvation, and the mercy shewn to you will in the end overflow to them; and God's universal condemnation will end in universal mercy (xi, 13-36).

This is God's pitifulness towards us: in return for it, we owe Him the offering of all that we are, in a life that refuses to take its pattern from this evil age. That life, remember, is the life of the members of Christ's body, in which each has his own gift. Use your gifts in the spirit of love, in mutual service; in diligence, humility, peacefulness, putting hatred and vindictiveness aside. As citizens of the Empire, be loyal and law-abiding, paying your dues for conscience'

sake, and not from fear. And remember that love is the supreme debt we owe each other: the whole law is summoned up in that. Time is short: the end is nearer than it was: live as though the day had already dawned; be sober, be serious (xii, 1—xiii, 14).

There are some matters in which special care is needed: there are scrupulous consciences among you to which you should shew yourselves considerate; be slow to pass harsh judgments upon them. If a man feels that he ought to eat nothing but vegetables, and you are too strong-minded for that, or observes such a day as the Sabbath with strictness, let him settle the matter with God and his conscience. It is God who will judge us: to Him we live, and not to ourselves; then let us refrain from judging each other. The matters which cause difficulty are nothing in themselves; there is, for instance, no Divine rule about 'clean and unclean' foods.[1] But we must avoid hurting one another's consciences: and the more strong-minded we are, the more unselfish we ought to be, setting Christ before ourselves as the perfect pattern of unselfishness. We must deal with one another as He has dealt with us. Recall once more what He has done; He came to make all the promises to the chosen race come true, and to bring a message of mercy to all the Gentiles, as the prophets so often foretold. May the God of hope, then, give you the fulness of this blessing! (xiv, 1—xv, 13)

My calling as Christ's minister to Gentiles must excuse what I have ventured to say to you. Christ has done great things through me—I would only speak of what He has done—and has enabled me to carry on my work as far as Illyricum, a long way from my starting-point, and always to work in untried fields. This has hindered me, so far, from coming to Rome; but now my work in Achaia is done, and on my way to Spain I hope to see you. First, however, I have to take the Achaian and Macedonian gifts to the poor of the Church in Jerusalem. There I may have dangers

[1] See footnote on p. 52.

to face : pray for me, and for a good reception of my mission to Jerusalem (xv, 14-33).

Phœbe, a helper of the Church in Cenchreæ, is on her way to Rome : she is worthy of anything you can do to help her.

Let me be remembered to many friends by name : I send you a greeting, too, from all the Churches. I must warn you, at the end, to avoid people who make trouble for selfish ends. Live up to what I know of you, and all will be well.

Kind remembrances are sent by Timothy, by Tertius, the secretary to whom this is dictated, and by other Corinthian brethren.

To the God of revelation and of the world-wide Gospel be all glory through Jesus Christ" (xvi, 1-27) !

The last chapter of the Epistle opens (1f) with a commendatory note for Phœbe, who perhaps was the bearer of the letter to Rome ; she was apparently a well-to-do member of the Church in Cenchreæ, the eastern port of Corinth : wealthy enough to be a helper or 'patroness' of many, and active enough to have an official position as 'deaconess' of the Church. Such commendatory letters may perhaps have been sent in earlier days from one Jewish community to another, and they are not unheard of in the university life of the Greeks. St. Paul alludes to them in a way which suggests that they were customary in the Christian Church from the earliest days (II Cor. iii, 1) and the New Testament affords other examples beside this case in Romans xvi (II Cor. viii, 16-24 ; Col. iv, 10 ; Tit. iii, 13) ; while II John, 10 reveals the caution that it became necessary to observe in the reception of strangers. Early Church history, which is full of evidence for the constant intercommunication between the Churches, shews how quickly this practice became systematized as a method of supplying certificates for communion.

Next (3-16) we have a series of greetings to members of the Christian community in Rome ; in Rome, we may say without much hesitation, in spite of the doubt alluded to

above (p. 116f.). The only names which suggest another locality are those of Prisca, Aquila and Epænetus. We have already met with Aquila and his wife in Corinth and Ephesus, but it was from Rome that they reached Corinth, and their departure from Ephesus may have been connected with the perils in which they 'risked their necks' (4) for St. Paul's sake, while the 'church in their house' may well have been only a revival of an association dating from the days before Claudius' edict of expulsion.[1] Epænetus, 'the first fruits of Asia unto Christ,' may have left Ephesus with them, after the uproar in the theatre. In any case, no one who realizes the ease and frequency with which early Christians found their way to Rome will be surprised to find Epænetus there.

Of the names which follow, many can be paralleled in Roman inscriptions bearing the names of members of the imperial household: but they are not uncommon elsewhere, and it appears that we must not lay too much stress on the epigraphic evidence as proving that we have to do with a Roman list here. On the other hand, 'they of Aristobulus,' and 'they of Narcissus' are really likely to have been Roman. There was an Aristobulus who was a grandson of Herod the Great, and lived in Rome as a friend of the Emperor Claudius; it is not known when he died, but on his death his dependents would very probably have become part of the emperor's household, while continuing to bear the name of their former master. There was also a Narcissus, an eminent freedman, who was put to death in the earlier part of Nero's reign, and nothing could be more likely than that his property, including the household, should pass to the emperor, and still be known as 'Narcissiani.' Here, then, we have at least two quite probable links with Rome, and links which would help to explain

[1] It is true that in II Tim. iv, 19 we hear of Aquila and Priscilla at Ephesus: but the date of this passage is not quite certain. If, indeed, it belongs to the very last stage in St. Paul's life, we must either say that the two had moved once again, or admit that the greetings in Rom. xvi are Ephesian after all.

the greeting from 'those of Cæsar's household' in Phil. iv, 22.

The whole list of names is indeed full of interest, and well worth studying with a good commentary. It is noticeable that apparently one other 'house-church' besides that of Prisca and Aquila is mentioned,—the brethren who are with Asyncritus and his companions; and that three of the persons greeted are of St. Paul's kindred or country—Herodion, who bears a name that might well be common in the household of Aristobulus, and Andronicus and Junias; the last two have, like St. Paul, suffered imprisonment for Christ's sake. They are of older standing, as Christians, than he, and as 'apostles' in the wider sense of the word have done notable missionary work.

After the salutations, St. Paul adds a characteristic final word of warning against those who cause division and scandal, which may usefully be compared with the similar passage at the end of the Galatian letter, and with the diatribe which comes in so abruptly in that to the Philippians (see p. 169f.).

The Jason who joins Timothy and the rest in sending his greetings has the same name as St. Paul's host in Thessalonica (Acts xvii, 7); Sosipater has been identified with Sopater of Berœa (Acts xx, 4). Had these two Macedonians come down to be near St. Paul in Corinth? It is quite possible: it is possible also that "Gaius mine host and of the whole Church" may be that Gaius whom St. Paul baptized (I Cor. i, 14). Whether Erastus the treasurer of the city is identical with the Erastus of II Tim. iv, 20, we cannot tell: it seems likely. Tertius is the only secretary of St. Paul whose name is recorded.

The concluding doxology is in some important MSS. placed at the end of chapter xiv; at the end, that is to say, of the shorter version of the Epistle which, as we saw above, was certainly current in early times. There is also early evidence for its omission altogether. But it forms a splendid conclusion to the whole, and compresses into one noble

sentence the cardinal thoughts of the Epistle; it is not at all improbable that it is in fact St. Paul's own final word.

Scrutinized minutely, phrase by phrase, the Epistle to the Romans is probably the hardest book in the Bible. It is the business of advanced students to attempt such a scrutiny. But we are aiming here at something less ambitious: and I believe that if we read through Romans in long continuous stretches, with some such help as the above analysis attempts to supply, we shall catch at least as much of its main drift as any of its first hearers could have apprehended, while we shall not lose ourselves in particular problems to which interpreters of St. Paul are prone to attach quite disproportionate importance.

One further exercise may be suggested, however, which will throw a flood of light upon the significance of this Epistle. Let the reader take the Revised Version of the Apocrypha, and turn to the book called II Esdras. The latter part of this book is a series of apocalyptic pictures of great interest: but the earlier chapters form a strange counterpart to the Epistle to the Romans. They deal with many of the same subjects—with the meaning of Israel's place in history, and the value and purpose of the Law: with the apparent tragedy of human life, both in Israel and among the Gentiles: with the problems of free-will and predestination, and the seeming injustice of the lot assigned to the vast majority of mankind. Here we have a Jew of the first century A.D., untouched by the message of Jesus, brooding over all the dark mysteries which make for pessimism: and we see how desperately he clings, hoping against hope, to a revelation which is forever in peril of fading into gloom: how he feels that the weight of brutal facts is against him, and yet holds fast to a despairing assertion that God is just, and cannot love His creatures less than we do, in spite of all the apparent waste that His providence permits.

These chapters should be read, and from them the reader should turn to the central part of Romans. He will need

to read carefully, asking himself, for instance, whether the treatment of predestination in Romans is any more tolerable than that in II Esdras. But he will find that at one point or other St. Paul seems to have found a triumphant answer to problems which are paralyzing his fellow countryman: he has found a meaning for the story of the Jew which leaves it indeed tragic still, but bright with hope, and a meaning for that of the Gentile which affords a large justification of the ways of God to men; he has found a clue to the Law, in the vision of God's unmerited grace, and a way out of the tyrannous despotism of evil in the acceptance of Christ as the Lord and Saviour of the whole man.

No one, I believe, can read through these two books together—II Esdras and Romans—without gaining a deeper insight into the mind of St. Paul and a truer estimate of the wonders which Christ's Gospel wrought through him. "There," we may say, looking at II Esdras, "but for the grace of God, goes Saul of Tarsus."

CHAPTER X

THE LETTERS OF THE CAPTIVITY: THE LETTERS TO THE COLOSSIANS AND TO PHILEMON

WHEN St. Paul wrote the Epistle to the Romans, at the close of his last visit to Corinth, he was hoping soon to visit Rome. It was indeed from Rome that the next group of his extant letters was written; but his journey to the capital of the empire as a prisoner, a citizen who had exercised his right of appealing to the Emperor in person, was very different from anything he had himself planned. The prospect of a great westward extension of his missionary work had now vanished; in its stead there was only that of a period of captivity and suspense, with the doubtful issue of the trial at the end of it. Yet the years of waiting in Rome were far from being fruitless; in his own hired house, though bound with chains to a guard, St. Paul was able to receive all who visited him, and to preach and teach with all boldness, unhindered (Acts xxviii, 30f). There is no evidence to shew how far he was able to keep in touch with his friends by letter; but the small surviving group of 'letters of the captivity' reveals him as maintaining close relations with Churches in Europe and Asia alike, and it is only reasonable to suppose that he expressed and developed his thoughts in many other letters now lost; indeed, when we realize what a stream of Christian travellers passed through Rome and from Rome to the provinces, we cannot think that St. Paul would miss the opportunities they offered him of sending messages to the Churches from which they came.

The four letters which survive cannot be placed in any

certain order. We may, however, conjecture that Philippians was the last of them, simply because in that letter the prospect of the trial seems nearer than in the others, and the hope of a speedy release—in spite of the uncertainty of the trial and its issue—is more vivid (i, 19-26, and note the word *immediately*, ii, 23) ; rather more so even in than in Philemon, where St. Paul bespeaks for himself a lodging, in view of his hope of soon being free to travel to Colossæ.

Colossians and Philemon were written and sent at the same time, their bearers travelling together. Ephesians was carried by the same messenger as Colossians, namely, Tychicus ; and which of the two was first written it is impossible to determine. Disregarding that question, then, as insoluble, we may conveniently take the Colossian letter and the private note to Philemon first, and Ephesians and Philippians after these.

With the exception of Romans, all the letters we have hitherto considered were written to Churches which St. Paul had founded and for which he still held himself to be peculiarly responsible. The letter to Colossæ stands apart, with Romans—and, as we shall see, with Ephesians—as directed to a community of which St. Paul had no first-hand personal knowledge. The triple group of Churches at Colossæ, Laodicea, and Hierapolis stood in the valley of the Lycus, a tributary of the Mæander, about one hundred miles inland from Ephesus. St. Paul might have visited these places on the westward journey described in Acts xix, 1, for they lay in fact on the great highway to Ephesus, but for some unknown reason he went along the higher ground to the North. Still, though St. Paul was not their evangelist, the Gospel did reach them, and that apparently through converts made during the period of his activity in Ephesus. One of these, it seems, was Epaphras the Colossian (Col. iv, 12 ; i 7), who took pains to pass on to his fellow citizens the inclusive Catholic message which he had heard so willingly himself.

Towards the end of St. Paul's two years in Rome he had with him several men who had an interest in the Christianity of the Lycus valley : Aristarchus the Thessalonian, who had shared his adventures on the journey to Rome, Luke the beloved physician, Demas, two Christians of Jewish birth, Jesus Justus and John Mark the cousin of Barnabas, and Epaphras himself (Col. iv, 10ff). Of these, Mark was intending soon to visit Colossæ : the difficulty which had arisen between St. Paul and Barnabas on his account had clearly been long forgotten ; he was now an active helper of St. Paul's work in Rome, sharing with Jesus Justus the honour of shewing that it was not impossible for Jewish-born Christians to work in loyal co-operation with the Apostle of the Gentiles. We may surmise that Barnabas also had some connection with Colossæ, for his relationship to Mark is mentioned in the words of commendation with which St. Paul prepares the way for Mark's coming journey thither. Epaphras, like Aristarchus, is described as St. Paul's ' fellow-captive,' and also as a beloved fellow servant of the Apostle. He, it is clear, had recently come from Asia, full of the keenest concern for the Churches of the Lycus valley (iv, 13), and deeply anxious for the stability and completeness of their faith. As being, perhaps, a founder of the Colossian Church, and a " faithful minister of Christ " on their behalf (i, 7), he was determined to secure for this Gentile community the help and advice of St. Paul ; he had therefore brought to Rome a full account alike of its strength and of its weakness. It is with the situation described in this report that the Epistle to Colossæ is concerned ; and the tone of the letter (e.g., ii, 1-3) shews that St. Paul was as anxious to help and guide the Colossians as if they had been actually, and not indirectly, his own children in the faith ; he wishes them to feel with him that his sufferings in Rome are endured for their sake, as a part of the whole body of Christ, just as his world-wide ministry includes them, among the other Gentiles, in its orbit (i, 24ff).

Epaphras' report must have been vivid and detailed ; it

included a reference to one Archippus,—'my fellow-soldier,' St. Paul calls him, in a phrase which was surely meant to go deep (Philem. 2)—a minister of the Church and perhaps a relative of Philemon: Archippus needed a word to remind him of the seriousness of his responsibilities, and St. Paul does not forget to send it, in the impressive form of a warning addressed to Archippus through the whole Colossian Church (iv, 17). But the whole Church itself needed a word of warning. Epaphras could speak of its good order, and of its general steadfastness (ii, 5), of its faith and overflowing charity (i, 4); yet these were menaced by the influence of some teacher or group of teachers who offered to the Colossians a 'philosophy,' a way of thinking and a rule of life, which claimed to be more complete, more fully Christian, than the Gospel which Epaphras had brought them. It would seem that this influence was not widespread: for although St. Paul appears to be anxious about the risk of its extension to Laodicea (ii, 1), and to provide against this by directing that his letter shall be read there as well as at Colossæ, there is no hint that it had already spread beyond the limits of the city. It is easier to comprehend the practical than the theoretical side of this teaching. On the practical side it was concerned with the enforcement of external rules—negative rules, forbidding certain kinds of food, presumably meat and wine, and positive rules enjoining the observance of sacred days, the new moon and the Sabbath; and these ordinances were based upon tradition, upon human precept and doctrine (ii, 8, 22).

Such 'traditions' must certainly have been Jewish in origin, whether those who professed them at Colossæ were Jews or not. Their attractiveness was enhanced by the tone of superiority which their advocates adopted; theirs, they said, was the higher way of living and thinking, and they treated ordinary Gentile Christians with some degree of contempt.[1] In return, St. Paul treats them as empty

[1] The R.V. is surely wrong in translating μηδεὶς ὑμᾶς

deceivers, inflated with intellectual pride, and attacks their doctrine as in essence anti-Christian.

It is hard, however, as we have said, to discover what that doctrine really was. The positive information to be gleaned from Colossians ii is scanty and obscure. We learn that the heretical teaching was a reversion back from Christ to the 'elements of the world' (ii, 8): and that it exalted angels, as objects of worship, in such a way as to detract from the supremacy of Christ (18f). But what were the 'elements of the world' to which the true Christian could be said to have 'died,' and what kind of teaching could be stigmatized as 'according to the elements of the world and not according to Christ'?

Perhaps there is no convincing answer to these questions. But we can at least see a way which may lead us along the right line of enquiry. In ii, 16 St. Paul says "*therefore* let no one judge you in respect of meat and drink," and so forth; and in iii, 1, "if *therefore* ye were raised with Christ, seek the things which are above." These two words[1] are in fact the hinges upon which the argument turns. Paraphrasing the first instance we may say that it means, "since then the genuine Gospel is like what I have now written, and not like what the heretical teachers are saying, you must not take any account of the practical rules which they try to set up"; and the second may be taken to mean: "since then you live your life in union with the risen Christ, and have nothing to do with fantastic systems of higher

καταβραβεύέτω "let no one rob you of your prize." The word is very rare, and no doubt, means etymologically to "do a person out" of a prize: but here it is probably only a more vigorous synonym for κρινέτω (judge) above (16). One has heard of cricketers thinking that they have been "umpired out"; and if St. Paul had any image in his mind in using the word, it may have been that of spectators usurping the umpire's function to disparage a competitor. I do not know any English word which conveys the notion of just that kind of disparagement.

[1] 'Therefore,' comes again in iii, 5 and 12, but the careful reader will see that 5ff is just a corollary to 4, and 12ff a corollary to 11.

thought, do not imagine that your salvation is going to depend upon merely physical rules." We can in fact look back from ii, 16, which is the conclusion of an argument, and treat what goes before it as the premises; or, to speak more plainly, we can be sure that from ii, 9, at least, and probably from the beginning of the letter, St. Paul has been emphasizing just those points of his teaching which the Colossian heresy had distorted or ignored. The earlier part of the letter, then, containing as it does the antidote to the Colossian poison, will enable us to discover something at least about the nature of that poison: and it is there that we must look for the answer to our question.

What, then, are the points upon which St. Paul there lays the greatest stress, and on which we must suppose the false teachers at Colossæ to have been in error? They are concerned in the main with two questions: how must we think about the place of Christ in relation to God and the world, and what is it that Christ has done for us? Christ, St. Paul answers, is the image of the invisible God, first begotten before all creation: in Him all the divine fulness dwells and is incarnate (i, 15, 19: ii, 9). He, the Son of God's love, is the agent through whom all created being, visible and invisible, has come into existence: it is He who contains in Himself the rational order which gives all creation its purpose and meaning (i, 16ff): everything that has been made, therefore, whether it be spirit or matter, is subordinate to Him. As for us Christians, we have been delivered through Him from the 'power of darkness,' the realm of evil, and translated into His Kingdom (i, 13): through His cross we are reconciled to God, that we may be set before Him blameless,—we who once were aliens and rebels (i, 21f); in our baptism we died and rose again with the risen Christ, and God has given us a new forgiven life in Him, in which we have no need to be anxious about the ordinances of the Law, for it is, as it were, nailed to the cross and so annulled. Moreover, this triumph of Christ is not confined to the human sphere: the spiritual powers

of evil were arrayed against Him, and encircled Him, but God has dispersed them, 'stripped them off' like a rent veil, and is victorious over them in Him (ii, 11-15).

This is a rough summary of St. Paul's answers; and from it we may guess, with some chance of being right, that he was opposing views which assigned to Christ a rank which was far from being supreme, and which certainly did not recognize His Lordship over created things, nor the finality of His victory over evil, nor the reality of the Christian belief that He is 'in us' (i, 27), as the hope of glory. We can guess that the Colossians were being led to think that there were hostile forces in the spiritual world, forces still unvanquished, which could only be overcome by those who worshipped the angelic hosts and won them over to their side; and that these evil powers held sway in the material world and its elements, so that the believer must free himself from them by ascetic renunciation. We must add, too, as we said before, that all these views were strongly tinged with Judaism; they laid stress upon the validity of the Law, possibly depreciating Christian baptism as compared with the rite of circumcision, (ii, 11f), and upon the astronomical round of 'festivals, sabbaths and new moons'; and so in many ways they concentrated their attention upon things earthly and temporal, instead of helping men to seek and contemplate 'the things that are above.'[1]

It is obvious that such a medley of speculation was very different from anything with which St. Paul had been brought into conflict in earlier days. It is true that the Greek word which in Colossians is rendered 'elements' meets us also in Galatians (the weak and beggarly rudi-

[1] The obscurity of ii, 18 is partly due to a corruption in the text. The rendering of R.V., "dwelling on the things which he hath seen" does indeed represent the best attested reading, but gives no tolerable sense. Possibly what St. Paul wrote was "vainly walking upon air," i.e. ἀέρα κενεμβατεύων (Taylor's brilliant conjecture) and not ἃ ἑόρακεν ἐμβατεύων.

ments, Gal. iv, 9), and this word may conceivably mark a point of contact between the earlier and the later stages of St. Paul's conflict with Judaistic tendencies: but the 'Judaizing' denounced in Colossians is a very different thing from that of the Galatian controversy. It is far more sophisticated: it is mingled with alien elements, and it is a new form of 'higher thought,' whereas that of Galatians was a simple conservative reaction. It is not surprising that St. Paul took the new situation seriously, and regarded the innovators as 'kidnappers' of the faithful, (ii, 8), unscrupulously clever (4), self-satisfied system-makers, who made a feeble show of intellectualism in this 'faked-religion'[1] of theirs (18, 23). Their activity in Colossæ had clearly met with some success, as we see from ii, 20, where the tone of warning is changed for a moment to something more severe, and the Church is directly taxed with having shewn some compliance with the injunctions of the new philosophy.

But the evil, however serious in itself, was still in a stage at which it might be counteracted; the Colossian Church was in real danger, but it had not yet fallen into apostasy; there was every reason to hope that its saner members might prove influential enough to recall the corporate body to sanity, if only their good influence could be strongly reinforced from without.

It was this reinforcement that St. Paul was anxious to supply, and attempted to supply by means of his letter. From his point of view the situation was novel, delicate and difficult. It was novel, because the 'higher thought' now in vogue at Colossæ was partly Jewish and partly pagan: it was in fact the first wave of a tide which in the coming century was destined to rise to a great height and to put the defences of apostolic Christianity to a very severe test. It was delicate, because however keenly St. Paul might feel his responsibility for the Gentile Churches, he could not be

[1] The excuse for this slang expression is that St. Paul himself uses a coined word, *ἐθελοθρησκεία*.

sure that Churches which he had never visited would acknowledge him as their rightful adviser; it was difficult, because he was a prisoner, and could not be certain that he would ever be able to complete by a personal visit the business in which he felt compelled to intervene by letter.

Yet if the letter is read with all these obstacles in mind, it will be seen not only that they are overcome, but that each of them is utilized with the skill of true generalship, and made to add weight to the writer's appeal. This is achieved in a very simple way, and with an effectiveness which no rhetoric could have attained. St. Paul merely writes with complete sincerity to people in whom he takes the deepest interest, taking it for granted that they are equally concerned for him. He is a prisoner, and at a distance: but he asks his correspondents to think of him as a confessor of their own Church, as suffering for their sakes, as playing their part in "filling up that which is lacking in the sufferings of Christ for his body's sake, which is the Church" (i, 24). Thus at once, by a subtle stroke of the pen, his claim to speak to them from his captivity is established; his life is linked up with theirs already, and the bearer of the letter will soon strengthen the link by telling them face to face of all that the captive Apostle is enduring (iv, 7). Further, even though he has never worked as a missionary in the Lycus valley, his commission as an Apostle of the Gentiles brings Colossæ within the sphere of his responsibilities,—it is a dispensation of God to the Colossians (i, 25) no less than to the Corinthians or Galatians. And in fact the evangelist of the Colossians, Epaphras, was St. Paul's deputy, and the story of the Church which he founded had been followed by St. Paul from the beginning with the keenest interest, with constant prayer for the rightful completion of the builder's work (i, 3ff, 9ff), and with such anxiety as only a responsible leader would feel (ii, 1f). Therefore the Colossians might think of him as constantly with them in spirit, as rejoicing in all the good order and stability of their common life, and at the same time as

watching over it with vigilance (ii, 4f). The letter St. Paul writes them contains some twenty-five imperatives; his right to issue injunctions is never explicitly claimed, but no explicit claim could be stronger than the accumulated suggestions in which it is implied. Even the greetings with which the letter ends are so worded as to reinforce it.

Again, although the situation at Colossæ was in some ways entirely novel, this was not the first time that St. Paul had to deal with a local Church which was in peril, through the lure of innovations, of forgetting its due relation to the great Church as a whole. The Corinthian Church, for instance, had been tempted to take a line of its own which would have brought it into sharp contrast with the rest of Christendom, and St. Paul had found it necessary to remind them that the faith did not originate with them, nor was it their own peculiar property (1 Cor. xiv, 36). To the Colossians he writes less sharply and less directly, but his point is no less clear because it is subtly made. He reminds them that the Gospel which has come to them is that same Gospel which in all the world is bearing fruit and increasing (i, 6), and that their right to the hopes which it brings is conditional upon their steadfast adherence to the truth which has been proclaimed 'in all creation under heaven' (i, 23). The faith they have been taught, the tradition they have received, contains within itself 'all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge'; no one need think that the refusal of novel speculations will cramp and impoverish his mind (ii, 2f, 6f); the true way of progress is to find out how inexhaustible the genuine Gospel is. The words which Browning puts into the mouth of St. John express the central thought of this letter:

> "I say, the acknowledgement of God in Christ
> Accepted by reason, solves for thee
> All problems in the earth and out of it,
> And has so far advanced thee to be wise."

Indirectly, and yet thoroughly, the suggestion is conveyed that the Colossians after all belong to a Catholic Church,

and are responsible for their trusteeship of a Catholic Gospel. The second paragraph of the letter (i, 9-23) should be read as a deliberate though subtle reinforcement of this suggestion. It speaks, in tones of triumphant thanksgiving, of all that God is doing for man in Christ, of all that Christ is in Himself and in the Church, of the world-wide scope of His redemptive work, and of the hope which He and He only brings within our reach. All this is not written haphazard, but with a definite purpose; the 'motive' of this overture is the glorious sufficiency of the revealed faith, and this the composer brings out clearly; but the whole passage is meant at every point to suggest that since the Gospel is complete and inexhaustible, it is folly to be seduced by second-rate distortions of the truth.

The letter contains singularly little in the way of actual argument; and this is so, because it is addressed to people with whom St. Paul had no reason or desire to argue. He was not dealing with the authors of the mischief at Colossæ, but only with those who were in danger of yielding to them; and for his purpose it was enough to recall the minds of the Colossian Christians to the central truths of the creed, and so to save them from perversions, rooted in a misconception of those truths, which were giving rise to rules of conduct incompatible with the true spirit of the Gospel.

Thus in the main the letter is characteristically positive. Its object is, not to disprove a heresy, but to beat it on its own ground, by shewing how far more complete and satisfying the unadulterated Gospel is. There are warnings against the persuasive power and the apparent weight of intellect ranged on the side of the opposition, as also against the sophisticated rules of life which it sought to impose; but St. Paul says as little as he can about these things, thinking probably that a strong word about the essentials of the faith and the vital elements of conduct was more likely to carry conviction than an elaborate refutation of error.

In this connection it is well to notice how the last two chapters are linked on to what precedes them. It is St.

Paul's way to speak of creed first and of conduct afterwards; but it would be a great mistake to think that the practical parts of his letters are mere appendices to the rest. There is always a vital connection between what he has to say about duty and what he has said about belief, and the reader can easily verify this for himself. In the case of the Colossian letter the links at this point are of special interest. Let the reader consider once again the four occurrences of the word 'therefore' (ii, 16; iii, 1, 5, 12); he will see that each of them is closely bound up with some great utterance about Christ:—Christ, supreme above the created world, has done away with the religion of servile obedience; with Christ we are risen; with Christ we shall be manifested in glory; in the new life Christ is all in all. *Therefore* we must not entangle ourselves in small and superstitious prohibitions; therefore we must 'fill our minds with the magnalities of religion, and our life with the honour of God'; therefore we must do to death all that is unworthy of Him; therefore we must ensue the new life in Christ's love and peace.

Clearly, a very close and vital connection between creed and life is here revealed. But I suggest that there is something more. St. Paul means to tell the Colossians that this is just what they need to realize. They think, or some people would have them think, that what they need is 'higher thought,' but it is not so. It will be quite enough for them if they can see how from the 'acknowledgment of God in Christ' there flow out corollaries which it will take them all their lives to work out. Let them give their minds to these things, which really do matter, and they will find that they have no leisure for trivialities. The great obligations of purity, mutual respect, and truth; the positive *imitatio Christi*, exercised in the atmosphere of thanksgiving and praise; the duties which human relationships involve, in the daily round of life;—these are enough and more than enough to occupy the wills, thoughts and prayers of those who 'serve the Lord Christ' (iii, 5-iv, 1).

Such is the burden of this letter; and when once the method of its writer is understood, it will be felt not to be,—as on the surface it might seem to be,—a rather obscure and formless enunciation of hard doctrines, but a masterpiece of spiritual discernment and shrewd practical wisdom. Nowhere is St. Paul's touch more sure and delicate, more firm and wise, than when he writes, from his captivity in Rome, to a Church which he has never seen, about a problem which he has never before been called upon to solve.

Both the letter to Colossæ and that to Laodicea, it seems, were carried by Tychicus, who was charged with a personal mission as a *liaison* officer between St. Paul and certain Asiatic Churches (Col. iv, 16, 7; Eph. vi, 21), and warmly commended to the Colossian Church. About the reception of Tychicus at Colossæ there was no reason to be anxious. But he took back with him at St. Paul's request a travelling companion whose case was very different. The slave Onesimus had left Colossæ as a runaway and a thief, and had drifted to Rome. There, perhaps because his master Philemon was a Christian, he had come into contact with St. Paul, had told him all his story, and had found that in the Christian Church a man such as he would not be refused the chance of a fresh start. His conversion was genuine, and between him and St. Paul there had sprung up something deeper than friendship. The rather lonely Apostle would have been glad to keep him in Rome, but plainly it was his duty to go back to his master, prepared to take his chance with him, and to repair, as far as was possible, the wrong he had done. It was not easy for Onesimus to do the right thing. In Rome he had the shelter of the Church's fellowship and the fatherly care of his friend and teacher. But what would become of him at Colossæ? Would the door of the Church be open to him there, and what sort of a reception would he have when he surrendered himself at the house of Philemon?

As St. Paul saw, these two questions were not entirely

separate. If Onesimus was repudiated by the Church, he would have a poor chance with his master. If Philemon proved to be obdurate, it would be very hard for Onesimus to maintain the good beginning he had made, and to persevere in the Christian life against the handicap of a hostile household and an unforgiving master. Clearly, then, it was necessary to win for him both the goodwill of the Church and also the complete forgiveness of Philemon.

Both of these things St. Paul set himself to do. As for the first of them, since Onesimus was now in good standing as a Roman Christian, it was best to assume, without apology, that he would take exactly the same place at Colossæ, as any other travelling Christian, bearing letters of commendation, would do. Accordingly the defaulting slave is commended to the Colossian Church as a faithful, beloved brother and one of themselves (Col. iv, 9); only one subtle touch is added,—Onesimus, like St. Paul's own envoy Tychicus, will be able to tell them much about what is happening in Rome. On the other hand, the private matter of the slave's relation to his master needed far more delicate handling; accordingly St. Paul wrote with his own hand to Philemon.

Some points in the address with which the letter opens are worth noting. It is interesting, for instance, that while Epaphras, who had had so large a share in the founding of the Colossian Church, is only named in the closing greetings, the name of Timothy comes at the beginning, with that of St. Paul, as a joint author of the letter, although the letter is clearly the work of one hand, and its contents are intimate and personal. The probable reason is that Timothy, as well as St. Paul, was a personal friend of Philemon; doubtless both of them had come to know him in Ephesus, where Philemon had been won over to Christianity; so the addition of Timothy's name would be a fitting courtesy. Onesimus also might be the gainer by having two advocates instead of one.

Again, the letter is not addressed to "Philemon, the be-

loved and fellow-worker" alone, but also to Philemon's wife Apphia, and to Archippus, Paul's fellow-soldier, with the Church in Philemon's house. If Archippus was a son of Philemon, it was natural that he should be addressed; moreover, St. Paul had sent him a rather serious message through the Colossian Church (Col. iv, 17), and to follow it up by a kindly word in a private letter would be a friendly act. But the inclusion of Apphia is even more noticeable. As a matter of law and business, the case of Onesimus was Philemon's affairs; his all but unlimited rights over his absolute property were involved. In the body of the letter St. Paul makes it plain that he recognizes this,—it is with Philemon and with him alone that he pleads his cause. Yet the well-being of the household slave depended at least as much on the mistress as on the master; and here was a Christian mistress, from whom some real help might be hoped for. Perhaps it would have been strange if Apphia had been passed over in silence by the Apostle who taught that in Christ Jesus 'there is neither male nor female.' But the fact that he does mention her is none the less significant. It means that the Gospel has already begun to affect the structure of society; the wife is beginning to have her place side by side with her husband.

Significant, too, is the mention of the Church in Philemon's house. It is as though, while recognizing the completeness of Philemon's rights, St. Paul wished to hint to him that 'none of us liveth unto himself'; for while, in the eyes of the law, the little society to which Philemon's wealth enabled him to give a home had less than nothing to do with Onesimus, on a higher plane it was deeply concerned in the decisions which Philemon would have to make, and in the well-being of the slave who was returning to claim a share in its fellowship.

Philemon owed to St. Paul his conversion to Christianity. Yet even had he still been a Pagan, St. Paul would doubtless have sent Onesimus back to him. The relation of slave and master was a recognized institution, and however much St.

Paul may have wished that all men were free and equal, it was no part of his vocation to conduct a campaign for the abolition of slavery. But it was his vocation to teach that in Christ the relation of slave and master could be altogether transformed, and that a Christian master and slave could live together on terms of mutual respect and inward liberty, as having an equal share in the privileges of the Divine family. The case of Onesimus was so far simplified; St. Paul had the strongest of all grounds for appealing to his master, and Onesimus had a real claim to be treated, not merely as a defaulter, but as a penitent coming back to admit his fault to the brother whom he had wronged.

Yet Philemon was a man of business as well as a good Christian. Generous though he was with his house and with his money (Philem. 5, 7), it was not to be lightly assumed that in a case like this he would easily make up his mind to take the most generous course. He had just cause for anger; the law was on his side, if he chose to be severe, and the discipline of his household might suffer if he was over-lenient.

Happily St. Paul divined that perfect frankness, with a touch of humour, would make an irresistible appeal to the master and the business man, while a word or two straight from the heart would win the response of love and understanding from the Christian and the friend. So he gives his letter the form of a promissory note. On Onesimus' behalf, admitting that in the past he has not been what the bearer of such a name[1] should be, he undertakes to pay all that is due by way of restitution: adding, however, the reminder that Philemon, who owes St. Paul a debt that money cannot pay, has now the chance of doing something to balance that account. On the other side, the appeal to

[1] *Onesimus* means 'helpful.' St. Paul plays on the name in v. 11, and again in v. 20, "let me have help, *or* gain (*onēsis*) of thee in the Lord." I cannot think of any other approach to a pun in the New Testament, except perhaps the appeal to 'Syzygus' (=yoke-fellow) in Phil. iv, 3.

Philemon's heart, from 'such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus,' is too beautiful to paraphrase; every line of it should be read carefully, 'with the spirit and with the understanding.'

Words so humble and convincing, so tender and considerate, could hardly have failed of their purpose; that they did not fail, the preservation of the letter by the Colossian Church, and its inclusion in the Pauline Canon, are sufficient proof.

CHAPTER XI

THE LETTERS OF THE CAPTIVITY: THE EPISTLE "TO THE EPHESIANS," AND THE LETTER TO PHILIPPI

THE Colossian letter, as we have seen, was taken to its destination by Tychicus, and was intended to be read aloud before the Church of Colossæ, and after that to be sent on for a second public reading at Laodicea. Another letter, the Colossians were told, would come on to them from Laodicea, to be read at Colossæ. St. Paul appears to assume that the Colossians already know, or will be told by Tychicus, of the existence and purpose of this other letter, for he merely refers to it as "the one from Laodicea." If we ask what that letter was, and what has become of it, we shall find the enquiry interesting. It is by no means a new one. Quite early in the history of the Church some unknown person, thinking that this letter ought to exist, but had perished, undertook to supply its place, and put together a feeble patchwork of Pauline phrases, calling it the letter to the Laodicenes.[1] But earlier still, just before the middle of the second century, Marcion of Pontus, the first great dissenter, had occupied himself with the question, and had reached the conclusion that the Laodicean letter had only been mislaid and misnamed, and that it was still to be found in the Pauline collection under the name of the Epistle to the Ephesians. Accordingly in his *Apostolikon* or Canon of Pauline Epistles, he renamed Ephesians as the Epistle to the Laodicenes. Now it is

[1] The text of this spurious Epistle is printed by M. R. James, *Apocrypha of the New Testament*, p. 478.

possible that in this he was neither quite right nor quite wrong; for there are difficulties in connection with Ephesians, difficulties which perhaps will never be fully solved, and Marcion's solution may prove to be not very far from the mark.

The first difficulty is that Ephesians, as we will call it, cannot possibly be a letter to the Church of Ephesus. In Ephesus St. Paul spent years of hard and successful labour; no other city was for so long a time his headquarters. It is certain that any letter written by him to this Church would have been full of personal reminiscence and allusion. Yet not only is Ephesians quite devoid of this kind of colouring, but it tells us plainly that the people for whom it was intended had no first-hand knowledge of St. Paul's apostolic work, though probably they had heard that he had been given 'a dispensation of the grace of God' for their benefit (iii, 2ff); and this makes it clear that when St. Paul says that he, for his part, has *heard* of their faith, he means that he only knows of it by what others have told him. Whatever Church or Churches this letter was meant for, it can hardly have been intended for that of Ephesus.

It is almost a relief, then, to find that the body of the letter, as apart from the title which it now bears, makes no reference to Ephesus at all. The oldest text of i, 1 now recoverable seems to have read—"Paul . . . . to the saints that are and faithful in Christ Jesus." Of course that is not what St. Paul himself can have written; but it is at least certain that the words 'in Ephesus' formed no part of the original text, nor were they found in any MS. during the first two or three centuries. Yet the Epistle was known under its present title at a very early date, perhaps as early as 110 A.D.; and it is to be presumed that its circulation under this title was the cause of the ultimate insertion of the words 'in Ephesus' into the text.

The body of the letter, however, does tell us something of the people for whom it was intended and of the time at which it was written. It was written during St. Paul's

captivity (iii, 1 ; iv, 1 ; vi, 19ff), and at a time when he was not definitely expecting any immediate change in his circumstances, but was hoping to have the opportunity of further witness for Christ in Rome ; his position, that is to say, was exactly the same as that indicated in the Colossian letter (Col. iv, 3). It was sent to Gentile Christians, who, though not personally known to the writer, were yet felt by him, because they were Gentiles, to come within the range of his commission (ii, 11 ; iii, 1f, etc.) ; and these Christians were people who had themselves been converted from Paganism, and were not Christians of the second generation (v, 8 ; iv, 20-22 ; ii, 13, 19) ; moreover, the fact that Jewish and Gentile Christians were now peacefully included within one Catholic Church was still novel enough to be a main theme of the letter.

The safest inference from all this is that Ephesians was written at the same time as the letter to Colossæ, and intended for a group of Asiatic Gentile Churches, a group to which the Churches of the Lycus valley belonged ; and that while it was a circular letter, so that Marcion was so far wrong in labelling it 'to the Laodicenes,' it was in fact the 'letter from Laodicea,' alluded to in Colossians iv, 16, i.e., a letter which in due course would reach Laodicea and come on from there to Colossæ. If we have to explain how it ever came to bear its present title, the answer must be that Ephesus was both the port of call at which Tychicus would begin his Asiatic journey and also the chief Asiatic Church, from which Ephesians would naturally begin its wider travels when it came to be circulated as one of the Pauline letters. It was therefore natural that a letter which perhaps bore the name of no particular Church, but reached the rest of Christendom from Ephesus, should be thought to have had Ephesus as its original address.

Nothing has been said hitherto of the doubt, which many scholars have entertained, whether Ephesians is a genuine or a spurious letter. I do not share that doubt, nor do I think it necessary to discuss it here at any length. It is

founded partly on the style and partly on the substance of the letter; partly on alleged discrepancies between its theology and that of the undoubtedly genuine letters, and partly on its strikingly close resemblance at many points to Colossians.

The argument from style and vocabulary is far from being cogent. No one can fairly say that in this respect Ephesians is a letter which St. Paul *could* not have written. Dictating or writing by himself, uninfluenced by Timothy or any other colleague, and dwelling upon themes which were to him of the most vital importance, working, too, in a mood of high exaltation, St. Paul could quite well have expressed himself in a manner as exceptional as that of Ephesians. Indeed, its exceptional character tells strongly against its rejection. It is a work of astonishing freedom and originality, and it is free and original just in those respects in which an imitator would be least likely to stray from the beaten track. It is not hard, for instance, to believe that St. Paul, writing under strong emotional stress, could have begun with a sentence which takes three whole chapters to reach a full close; but to suppose the existence of an imitator, anxious to pass himself off as St. Paul, and yet imagining that he would best achieve his aim by so daring an innovation, is to suppose a literary miracle.

As for the substance of the Epistle, the genuineness of Colossians being presupposed, I find no difficulty in supposing that St. Paul could have written two letters, practically at the same time, having a large common element of thought and language, though differing considerably in their immediate purpose. In Ephesians itself, however, there is one difficulty which ought to be mentioned here. It has been suggested that the writer speaks of the apostles in phrases which indicate that he is looking back on the apostolic age as a past period. When he speaks, for instance, of the mystery of Christ as revealed "to *his holy apostles* and prophets in the Spirit" (iii, 5), it has been felt that this expression, natural enough in the post-apostolic period, is

not likely to have been used by one who claimed to be an apostle himself. Admittedly the expression is remarkable, and has no precise parallel in the New Testament. Yet St. Paul was wont to call all Christians 'holy,' or 'the saints,' and the sentence in which the epithet is applied to the apostles is pitched in a very lofty key: it speaks of a secret concealed from the mass of mankind in former generations, and now revealed through the Holy Spirit; and it is hardly strange that the first heralds of this revelation should be referred to as marked by the distinguishing character of the Spirit's manifestation. And if anyone feels that '*the holy apostles*' is a strange expression in the mouth of St. Paul, let him ask whether any writer using St. Paul's name, and being naturally disposed to surround the apostles' heads with a halo, would have thought of describing himself as "the least of all saints." To my mind the inimitableness of this latter touch cancels out every atom of difficulty found in the earlier part of the same sentence.

Scientific criticism has discovered other and more recondite objections. Of these it is safe to say, without going further, that they raise no difficulty comparable to that of imagining an imitator capable of forging so noble a work of spiritual genius as this. There is no point at which Ephesians reads like a second-hand reproduction of St. Paul's manner. The reader may confidently approach it as a genuine work of the Apostle of the Gentiles.

It is indeed a 'tract for the times,'—and for a time which swiftly passed into oblivion—in which St. Paul gathers up all that he feels as to the significance of his Catholic mission. From his Roman imprisonment he contemplates a distant part of the field of work assigned to him, a region in which others have laboured on his behalf, and to this region he sends out a message *de unitate ecclesiæ*. It is not a general out-pouring on the subject of unity, nor is it, as has sometimes been thought, a hymn of thanksgiving for the achievement of unity between the Jewish and Gentile sides of the

Church; it is rather a definite message to definite people about the significance which the unity of the Church must have for them. It is vital, we may imagine St. Paul saying to himself, that these Gentile Christians should realize that their inclusion in a Catholic Church is a Divine achievement, and the fulfilment of an age-long process of revelation. They have been brought out of darkness and hopelessness into a fellowship which existed long before they even heard of it, 'the commonwealth of Israel'; for God's true Israel, to which they now belong, is founded on a covenant and promise which go back to the childhood of the race. From that covenant, till Christ died for all men, the vast majority of mankind were excluded. Jew and Gentile stood over against each other in an irreconcilable contrast. But in Christ that contrast has been done away; God's city and household have received, in principle and promise at least, a vast extension. But the city is far older than its present enlargement, and the new citizens, as they join the elder company of saints, must learn what their enfranchisement means; they must see in it, not an accidental privilege of their own, but the working out of a great and inclusive purpose for mankind.

Further, they must learn more and more of the obligations which their new status lays upon them. They form only one part of a great unity which expresses itself in diverse forms of spiritual life. They must learn that each particular and differing element within the one life has a right to exist only in so far as it serves and seeks the unity of the whole. They must be made to see that they are called to identify themselves wholly, in all their conduct and in every relation of life, with the light and life which are in Christ, in absolute contrast with the darkness and moral death from which they have been rescued. They stand,—so they must be made to feel,—over against all the massed forces of evil in the created world, as the *militia Christi;* therefore they must realize how potent are the arms with which Christ equips His soldiers, and learn to

use their equipment with fidelity and confidence. Only so can they, who have learnt to love the Lord Jesus, love Him with complete loyalty, 'in incorruption.'

As has already been said, the first three chapters of Ephesians are one prolonged sentence. Again and again the writer seems about to bring it to a close, but some new thought or word is always presenting itself and leading him away down a fresh by-path, until the thread of connection seems entirely lost. No part of the Bible is harder to read aloud. The habit of following up fresh clues, or modulating from one thought to another, is indeed characteristic of St. Paul; but the opening of Ephesians is unique in respect of the liberty which is taken there with the logical sequence of the main ideas. Yet there is a sequence, and when once it is apprehended, the Epistle can be understood as a whole. It may therefore be of service to supply a compressed version of chapters i-iii, from which the reader may turn to the text and read the whole through continuously.

"God in Christ has blessed us whom He foreordained and has redeemed, (i, 3-9) by revealing His purpose to sum up all things in Christ (10) and giving us, who are of the chosen race, our special place of privilege (11-12);

He has also extended the gifts of His message to you Gentiles, including you also among His chosen people (13-14);

Since then you also are among the faithful, I give constant thanks for this, and I pray
That you may grow in enlightenment (15-18);
apprehending both the wonderful hope that opens out before you, and also the stupendous act of God from which it springs (19);

That is, the enthronement of the risen Christ above all creation (20-21), His establishment as head of the Church: in which, as His body, Christ himself is coming to the fulness of all that He is to be (22-23): and the gift of life with Christ to you who were dead

in sin (ii, 1-9) which is nothing less than a new act in the story of creation itself (10).

Do you then look back and see how far you once were away from God (11-13).

We indeed were nearer to Him: but there was a great barrier between us and you (14):

That barrier is down; the Law no longer stands in the way between us (15): and through Christ's Cross both we and you have a new access to God (16-18). Jew and Gentile being made together the beginning of a new humanity in Christ.

Aliens once, you are at home in God's city now (19): full citizens, built into the living temple (20-22).

And because of this, I, the unworthy herald of this catholic Gospel (iii, 1-13) pray to the Father, of whose nature all fatherhood is a reflection (14-15) that with the Spirit to strengthen you, and Christ to dwell in you, you may go forward, with the whole Church, into ever completer knowledge and love, towards the fulness of all that God means redeemed mankind to be (16-19).

A doxology brings all this outpouring of thankful prayer to a close on a full note of praise. From this point onwards the structure of Ephesians becomes perfectly clear, for the remainder of the letter is built upon a series of imperatives, linked each to each and to the main thought of the letter by the repeated conjunction 'therefore' (iv, 1, 17, 25; v, 1, 15).

In the main St. Paul desires to awake in his readers the sense of a twofold obligation, which springs in both its aspects from the 'revealed mystery' for which he has just uttered his thanksgiving; they are to understand, first, that they themselves are responsible for maintaining this oneness of the living Church (iv, 1-16), and next (iv, 17—vi, 20) that loyalty to Christ demands unrelenting warfare against the spirit of the world.

The first duty enjoined, then, is that of mutual understanding and forbearance, resting on humility and main-

tained by patience, or 'long-mindedness.' St. Paul might have said bluntly, "You Gentiles must be good neighbours to each other and to Jewish Christians, whose rights are in every way as good as yours"; but he prefers—as he always does—to lift the matter to a higher plane. So he teaches that the oneness of the Christian body is rooted in the unity of God Himself: the one body, indwelt by the one Spirit, entered by one baptism, inspired by one faith, is the body of the one Lord, Whom we owe, with all His gifts, to the one Father of all. But while the Lord is one, and His body one, His gifts are manifold; and each of us is to think of himself as equipped with powers which he must use for the building up of the whole fellowship of the saints. Thus there opens up a new perspective of hope and duty; the 'completed humanity,' the 'fulness of Christ,' the unity of the faith are seen as a goal to be attained, through the loyal service of those whom Christ enriches; for while now there is already one body, still it is not yet that body which shall be, but a sphere in which diverse tasks and opportunities are given us, that we may make our differing contributions towards the growth of the whole living fabric. If we remember that our gifts are not our own, and not the same as our neighbours', we shall preserve the unity of the Spirit in 'the bond of peace.'

The second duty, with its root in the mercy of God, is summed up in v, 8—"Ye were sometime darkness, but now light in the Lord: walk as children of the light." There is no need to analyze the pages in which the various aspects of this obligation are drawn out. But the reader should discern and bear in mind the background against which St. Paul's picture of Christian manhood stands out. Pagan life, the old life, is to him a scene of vanity, corruption and decay, dominated by untamed desires, and bringing manhood down to ruin; Christian life, the new life, is the re-creation of fallen humanity by the grace of God. The new manhood which is after God's pattern is striving to make headway against the old, but it has heavy odds

against it; the mass of mankind, alienated from God, is on the side of darkness, and behind all the evil impulses of man's heart there stand the incalculable spiritual forces of evil, which have their home in higher regions and yet hold sway in this world-order of ours. Thus the true warfare of the Church is not against 'flesh and blood,' but against supernatural forces hostile to man's true well-being. Further, this warfare is destined to come to a climax. St. Paul does not employ the language of Jewish apocalyptic which he employed in writing to Thessalonica, but at the bottom his conceptions are unchanged. A time is near at hand, he believes, when the conflict will be fought to an issue, an 'evil day' (vi, 13) which will be decisive; even now the opportunity is but a fleeting one, for the days are already evil, and it behoves the Christian to discern and redeem his chance (v, 16), equipping himself in good time with all the weapons of defence and offence which God has ready for him.

Such is the practical burden, and such the background, of St. Paul's great testament to the Gentile Churches. It is, as has been said, a tract for its own times, times which quickly passed away: it reflects a moment when the peaceful inclusion of the Gentiles was still a new thing, and yet an accomplished fact; when the expectation of a speedy end to this age was still strong, but side by side with it the vision of a long growth-period for the body of Christ was growing in clearness; when the first epoch of the Church's story was almost ended, and the forces which were to mould the next period were coming into view; the moment, that is, when St. Paul's own lifework was all but done, and its results must be left for other hands to continue—or abandon —and for other times to test. Yet, just because it is a message for a time of transition and crisis, and because it interprets that time in the light of truths which do not change, it is a message for all times, a mirror in which the Church can always discern its own ideal, and the abiding law which its members must serve and obey.

The three letters to Colossæ, to the Ephesians, and to Philemon were written by a prisoner who could not foresee how long he might still have to wait for his trial, and yet had good ground for hoping that when the trial came it would end in an acquittal. Writing privately to Philemon, and anxious, no doubt, to make him realize that it might not be long before Onesimus, Paul and Philemon would come face to face once again, he told him more of his hopes than of his anxieties: "Prepare to have me as a guest, for I hope that through your prayers I shall be granted to you." To the Colossian Church he wrote more guardedly, telling them only that the news which Tychicus and Onesimus were bringing would not be discouraging to them (Col. iv, 8). And although the hope of freedom, and the plan for a journey to Asia Minor, were clearly in his mind at the time, yet, as things were, it was more likely on the whole that he would still be kept for some time in Rome; and so, while he asks that his sufferings as a prisoner may not be forgotten (Col. iv, 18), he also asks, both in Colossians and Ephesians, that he may be remembered as one who has work to do in the place where he is confined; and his friends are to pray that a door of the word may be opened to him, that utterance may be given him to make known the mystery of Christ (Col. iv, 3; Eph. vi, 19); the chained ambassador of Christ has still some responsible work to do, and opportunities of direct 'plain speaking' which he is anxious to use aright.

In the letter to the Philippians, however, the situation is not quite the same. It is more critical: for the decisive moment is now quite close—St. Paul will see in a very short time how the case will go; and his mind is full of mingled perplexities and hopes. Life and death are before him, and he does not know which to desire. For himself he would wish to depart and "be with Christ which is very far better," and yet he knows that there is still work for him to do here, and firmly believes, after many swings of the pendulum, this way and that, that he will be called to stay here and do

it (ii, 23 ; i, 19ff). But there are no longer any allusions to the possibility of future work to be done by him as a prisoner in Rome. He does indeed speak of the spread of the Gospel within the city ; but his words are " I would have you know, brethren, that the things which have happened to me have fallen out rather unto the progress of the Gospel ; so that my bonds became manifest in Christ throughout the whole prætorian guard and to all the rest ; and that most of the brethren in the Lord, being confident through my bonds, are more abundantly bold to speak the word of God without fear (i, 12ff)." Some of these phrases are obscure, yet the general sense is clear, and we may interpret it thus. St. Paul's condition has undergone a change, and such a change that the Philippians have become anxious, fearing that it must have put an end to his activities. This, however, is not the case ; and therefore St. Paul reassures them ; so far from forcing him into in activity, this change has brought him fresh opportunities ; he has found new work to do as a prisoner, and the wider work which he was formerly able to do is being carried on by others. It was for the prospering of this wider work that he had asked the prayers of the Colossians ; but now, so far as he himself is concerned, it is a thing of the past.

Some scholars of great authority have thought that Philippians was written at an early stage in the Roman captivity ;[1] but if the interpretation given here is sound, we must infer the exact opposite, and hold that some little time before the writing of Philippians, the two years during

[1] The case for this view is fully argued in Bp. Lightfoot's *Philippians*, pp. 30-46. It rests partly on the resemblance between Philippi and the earlier Epistles, as contrasted with the Colossians and Ephesians. I should be inclined to explain these as due chiefly to the fact that the circumstances of the Philippian Church were totally different from those of Colossæ and of the group addressed in ' Ephesians,' and demanded simpler treatment.

There is very little to be said for connecting Philippians with Cæsarea. A more interesting hypothesis is that it was written from Ephesus, during an imprisonment there, which Acts omits to mention. For references, see the article *Philippians* in Hastings' *Dict. of the Apostolic Church.*

which St. Paul lived in his own hired house, preaching and teaching without hindrance, had come to an end; that he was now in stricter captivity, so as to be available for trial or examination at any moment, and that in spite of this, and of the inference which the Philippians had actually drawn from it, he had found ready hearers in his new and apparently unfavourable surroundings. His letter to Philippi is then the last of the Epistles of the Captivity.

In the Roman 'Colonia' of Philippi St. Paul had spent adventurous days on his second great journey; beginning with the little Jewish Colony, too insignificant to have a Synagogue of its own, he had gathered around him the nucleus of a Church, in which proselytes and other Gentiles were presumably in the majority; then had followed the episode of the girl with a spirit of divination, the arrest of the missionaries, their illegal scourging by the *duumvirs*, their imprisonment, their dramatic release, and the no less dramatic *volte-face* of the magistrates (Acts xvi). On the departure of St. Paul, the little Christian community may have drawn some consolation from the fact that he went away in some measure rehabilitated by the Roman authorities, yet they had reason to fear that hard times lay ahead of them. Ten or more years later, when St. Paul's letters were written, they were feeling the weight of serious official opposition, they were suffering on Christ's behalf, and fighting the same battle in which the Apostle was himself engaged (Phil. i, 29f).

Twice again, five years after his first visit, St. Paul spent some time in Philippi. On his way from Ephesus to Corinth he devoted himself to the encouragement of the Macedonian Churches, and early in the following year, on the eventful journey which was to end in his arrest in Jerusalem, he spent Easter at Philippi, where St. Luke, who apparently had stayed on in Philippi during the preceding five years, rejoined him as a travelling companion (Acts xx, 1-6). But the intercourse between the Apostle and his Philippian friends was

not limited to personal visits. 'From the first day' onwards they shared in the furtherance of the Gospel; they sent help once and again to St. Paul in Thessalonica, just after he had left them; and when the collection for the saints was being organized, neither the stress or suffering nor the narrowness of their means hindered the Churches of Macedonia from making a generous contribution (Phil. i, 5; iv, 15f; II Cor. viii, 1-4). Clearly these gifts and contributions must have led to repeated correspondence between St. Paul and Philippi. They were indeed interrupted for some years, through lack of opportunity rather than of good-will; but at last the Apostle's imprisonment in Rome brought about a renewal of the old relations. That renewal was, in part, the occasion for the sending of St. Paul's letter.

Epaphroditus—the name was a common one, and there is apparently no urgent reason for identifying him with the Epaphras of the Colossian letter—was a brother, fellow-worker, and fellow-soldier of St. Paul. That he was a Philippian is possible but not certain; in any case the Philippian Church chose him to be its messenger, and to take from them a gift towards the support of the Apostle in Rome. His journeys were difficult and dangerous, and through some cause of which we are not told he had to take his life in his hand to reach Rome. Apparently he was unable to take back to Philippi St. Paul's message of acknowledgment and thanks; indeed, he was very ill in Rome —perhaps he reached the city at a bad time of year—and the messenger who did carry the acknowledgment took back also the news of his illness, and, on returning to Rome, was able to tell Epaphroditus how distressed the Philippians were about him. In the meantime, Epaphroditus had recovered; and since he was anxious to get back to Philippi, and St. Paul had some important messages to send there, it was natural that he should be dispatched, with warm commendations, as the bearer of a letter to the Philippian Church (Phil. ii, 25-30). Without doubt one of the purposes of this letter was to tell the Philippians exactly how St.

Paul felt about their gift to him. But if it is read carefully it will be seen that it is not a mere letter of acknowledgment. The acknowledgment, it is reasonable to think, had preceded it by some months, and it looks as though St. Paul were now anxious to reassure the Philippians as to the completeness of his gratitude to them, and to make it plain that he does not feel that he has been unreasonably neglected in the past, or insufficiently helped at the present time. He tells them how glad he is to recall what they did for him in early days; that he knows that they would have continued their liberality, had it been possible; and,—if this is the right construction to put upon his words—that they must not now feel that he is in any way disappointed in them (iv, 10-18). Letters of thanks are not easy to compose; and it looks as if some word or phrase in St. Paul's acknowledgment, or perhaps the general impression made by his messenger, had left the Philippians with an impression which it was advisable to correct as delicately as possible.

Another impression which needed to be corrected was the too gloomy view which the Philippians had formed about the change in St. Paul's own situation; he did not wish them to go on thinking that he had been silenced and rendered wholly inactive, but rather to feel that he was still doing important work, in which they, through sympathy and intercession, must have their share.

The letter has one other recurrent motive, that of unity. Perhaps it had been reported to St. Paul that there were symptoms at Philippi of differences of opinion which threatened to harden into divisions; a tendency to self-assertion and self-will; unfriendly relations between Euodia and Syntyche, for example, which might easily lead to serious trouble. Possibly also there was a hint that even Philippi contained some sympathizers with the old anti-Pauline, narrowly Judaic way of thinking, from whom little help could be expected in keeping the peace (ii, 1ff, 14; iv, 2f; iii, 2ff). At any rate there was disunion enough to call for some plain words from the Apostle. We cannot

indeed pierce the veil which shrouds his allusions to the two dissidents whom he names, and to the 'true yoke-fellow,'—was his name Syzygus?—whose help he asks in reconciling them; we can only discern how regretfully he remembers the band of women who once contended on his side, "with Clement and the others whose names are in the Book of Life," and how sorry he is that all is not well with their survivors. But veiled as his allusions are from us, they must have been quite clear to the Philippians, and so was the very solemn adjuration (ii, 1ff) in which he bids them to be "of the same mind, having the same love, being of one accord, and of one mind, doing nothing through faction or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind each counting the other better than himself."

It is this adjuration by all the comfort, consolation of love, and fellowship of the Spirit, which are found in Christ, that leads St. Paul on to the first great climax of the letter. All the present glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, in which He claims the adoration of created beings in every sphere, is the fruit of His utter abandonment of self, in which He stooped to a life of subjection and of obedience culminating in the death of the cross. In this wonderful passage, necessary though it may be for theologians to scrutinize every term employed, the weight and meaning does not depend on its detail, but upon the picture as a whole; the 'Lord from heaven,' of whose transcendent glory St. Paul has written in more doctrinal terms to the more speculative Colossians and Ephesians, is here simply depicted as the type and example of selfless humility: if Jesus Christ had stooped to endure servitude and crucifixion, and if the 'name that is above every name' derives its glory from self-abasement, then selfishness, grumbling and contentiousness, disunion and pride must be renounced by His followers; who are called to be blameless and harmless in the midst of a crooked generation, working out their own salvation with awe, and remembering that it is God who works in them both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

There are, then, certain themes which recur in this letter and may be taken as its main motives. But it is quite definitely a *letter* and not a treatise: it travels from point to point with no great care for logical sequence, one thing suggesting another almost casually, as is the way of letters. Thus the thought of the writer's own work and of his desire that it should not be fruitless leads on to that of his possible martyrdom; his appeal to the Philippians to rejoice in this with him leads on to the thought of the messengers whom he is sending or hopes to send, in order that he may learn at first-hand how they fare (ii, 16-19). This homely and unstudied way of writing enabled St. Paul in the end, no doubt, to say all that he wanted to say, but it leads at times to transitions which seem to the modern reader almost impossibly abrupt. An instance of this is found after iii, 1, in a passage which has provoked endless discussion.

St. Paul suddenly turns to warn the Philippians, in unmeasured language, against those who would enforce the requirement of circumcision, calling them 'dogs, evil workers,' advocates of something that does not deserve so honourable a word as circumcision at all. This violent verse is prefaced by the puzzling words, "to write the same things to you to me is not irksome, and for you is safe." Does this mean that what is about to follow has already been the subject of a former letter? And are the following verses explicable at all, or are we to think, as some scholars have done, that we have here an intruded fragment which does not belong to the present letter at all?

The difficulty in this last hypothesis is that although the passage begins abruptly, it ends calmly, and links on at iii, 16 and iv, 1 quite naturally with what follows. I should prefer to think that we have here only an exceptionally strong example of St. Paul's method in letter writing. It is clear from i, 15-17; ii, 21, (and iii, 17), that in the background of his mind, as he writes, there is a strong current of distress and resentment at certain forms of opposition and lack of support which he is experiencing in Rome.

This is not indeed what he means to write about; but when he has written or dictated the word 'safe,' in iii, 1, it suddenly brings to his mind a vivid sense of the *dangers* with which the Gospel is encompassed, and without a word of transition he allows himself to say all that he feels. The result is a passage such as only St. Paul could have written, so compounded is it of small things and great; it passes from bitter invective and the self-assertion of a troubled spirit to the heights of spiritual vision and the depths of Christian humbleness; it is like a storm which passes quickly and leaves bright sunshine behind it. Nor does it only close in splendour; even at its beginning we have its momentous words '*we* are the circumcision,' which sum up all that St. Paul has to say as to the relation of Christ's Church to that of the old Covenant, and were destined to have a momentous influence upon the Christian use of the Old Testament in times to come.

I would suggest, then, that if we remember that St. Paul was human, passionate, subject to strong revulsions of feeling, and, above all, a letter writer who very often allowed his thoughts to follow their own logic, restrained by no rigid or pre-conceived scheme of argument, we shall not find it at all impossible to accept this passage, the second great climax of the letter, as belonging to the original fabric of the present Philippian letter, a fabric from which it cannot indeed be separated without leaving very ragged ends in the gap which its removal would cause.

Accepting, then, the conclusion that iii, 2-16 is here in its original place, let us notice what a perfect sample it is of St. Paul's method. It procceds not by logic but by 'modulation'; the great thought of v.3, which is so essential to St. Paul's philosophy of history, springs out of the ugly word 'concision' in v.2; the defiant assertion of his status as Hebrew and Pharisee, out of the last word of v.4; and when the harsh tones of controversy die away, and only pure music is left, each chord leads with unpremeditated art to the next; so that at the end we find our-

selves at a distance indeed from the original key, and in a region of spiritual beauty astonishingly remote from the jarring discord with which we began. This transition from bitterness and self-assertion to the utmost humility, from 'look at the dogs' to 'I count not myself to have apprehended,' is one of the most astonishing things in literature; yet it is intensely human, and perfectly characteristic of St. Paul.

I do not attempt any analysis of this letter, which is indeed too much of a letter to admit of analysis; but the interpretation already suggested of its leading thoughts and motives should make it easy enough to follow without the aid of a summary.

CHAPTER XII

THE PASTORAL EPISTLES

WITH the close of the Philippian letter our certain knowledge of the story of St. Paul breaks off. We leave him in Rome, in close confinement, awaiting his trial and quite uncertain which way it will go, and yet expecting on the whole that he will be set at liberty. After this, all is obscure; and the New Testament offers us no guidance beyond what we can extract from the puzzling group of letters to Timothy and Titus.

We may call them a group, partly because they are addressed to individuals—although we cannot class the letter to Philemon with them—and partly because they are linked together by the possession of certain characteristics which mark them all alike and distinguish them from all the other letters attributed to St. Paul. Some of these characteristics can easily be observed by the English reader. He will be struck by the frequent recurrence of the phrase, 'faithful is the saying,'—perhaps he will wonder whether this has crept in from the marginal notes of some admiring reader or copyist, or whether it refers to certain well-known utterances which had become familiar to the Church when the letters were written. He will note how frequent are the allusions to 'sound teaching,' 'the faith,' the 'commandment'; how often the body of Christian revelation is spoken of as a 'deposit' or as the 'truth'; and he will observe how much space is given to rather formal instructions about the good order of the Church, with its ministers and dependents. All these things, with others, will suggest

themselves, and cannot fail to strike the attentive student who reads through these letters continuously. But although the English version reveals as much as this, and does not quite conceal the less obvious differences of style and manner which mark these letters, it cannot show how very frequent is the occurrence of words which have no parallel elsewhere in the Pauline writings. In every letter, indeed, there are plenty of words which do not occur elsewhere: but the proportion in the Pastoral Epistles is extremely high.[1]

We must therefore be prepared, with these unquestioned facts before us, as the result of a preliminary reading, to find that the problem of the Pastoral Epistles is a very perplexing one; and no lover of the New Testament can realize this without regret, for here and there in these letters passages occur which are loved and remembered by all of us.

Remembering, then, that in style, manner and vocabulary the three Epistles hang closely together, let us consider briefly what their substance is.

I Timothy and Titus agree in one important point, namely, that they tell us little or nothing about the situation of the writer, and therefore we will consider them first. Timothy, in the first of these letters, is in Ephesus: St. Paul has left him there when on his way to Macedonia: St. Paul is hoping to visit Ephesus soon, but knows that he may be delayed for some time. The purpose of the letter is to give interim directions about Church order, and its recipient is a young man, one, who, having witnessed the good confession before many witnesses, was designated by prophecy for responsible work, and was ordained and equipped for it by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery (i, 3f; iii,

[1] It has been calculated that for every three verses there are two such words; and the inference to be drawn from this is that either all three letters were written out by one secretary, who expressed himself in a very different language from that of St. Paul himself, or that St. Paul was capable of varying his vocabulary to a rather abnormal extent, or that the letters as they stand do not come from his workshop at all.

14 ; vi, 12 ; i, 18 ; iv, 14). It is written as from a father to a son ; it is an official charge, but the personal touch is not wanting. The writer knows that his young delegate needs every encouragement in his own inner life and in his delicate relations with older Christians, who may be recalcitrant (iv, 12ff ; v, 1f) : nor does he shrink from reminding him, how all his own work had its beginning in the ' grace abounding ' which arrested him when he was a blasphemer and persecutor and transformed him into a faithful servant of Jesus Christ i, 12ff).

At Ephesus, danger is to be apprehended from heterodox teachers, who deal in all sorts of sophistication, and attempt to enforce the law, which they entirely misunderstand. Two such teachers are named as having been already excommunicated (i, 3-11, 19f). Apostasies of this kind are to be expected—Christian prophets have definitely foretold them, and have forewarned us against persons who would inculcate celibacy and vegetarianism on religious grounds (iv, 1ff : cf. II Tim. iii, 1 ; II Pet. ii, 1 ; Jude 4).

The true antidote to these poisons is a life based on prayer and intercession ; and the first practical teaching that must be given is that men should learn to pray, and women to dress quietly and keep themselves in the background (ii, 1-15).

At this point the letter passes rather abruptly to deal with questions of Church Order. The proper qualifications for bishops, deacons, and the wives of deacons are enumerated (iii, 1-13) ; then follows an interlude on the Church, its dignity and present perils (iii, 14—iv, 5), which leads on to a personal exhortation to Timothy himself (iv ; v, 6-16). From this we pass to Timothy's official relations with other office-bearers and with various types of Church members : to regulations for the recognition of widows as claimants on the Church's fund, and to ordinances relating to the presbyterate (v, 1-25). The last chapter contains, as well as a stirring charge to Timothy (vi, 11-16), a word for slaves, and for the rich (1-2, 17-19), and a further

warning against the intellectual and moral dangers of unsound teaching (3-10).

Woven into the fabric of the letter, which tends to be rather formal, are a few personal allusions of a very natural kind, such as the injunction to give up drinking water and to take a little wine for medical reasons, a sentence which comes in rather strangely, without apparent relation to what precedes or to what follows it (v, 23). Yet, this injunction, like the lofty appeals to Timothy in chapters iv and vi, is not the kind of thing which is likely to have been invented by anyone writing in St. Paul's name; and the general impression which the letter makes is that here and there, at least, we are in the company of the St. Paul whom in the other letters we have learnt to know.

The letter to Titus is not unlike I Timothy. Titus, we are told, had been left in Crete to complete the organization of the Churches there, and particularly to choose and appoint sound-minded, well-living elders or bishops in each city (i, 5). These officers must have certain qualities of mind and character in view of the prevalence of misleading teaching. Judaizing perversions of the truth and unsound moral precepts have to be countered, and some bitter words are spoken against those who propagate them (i, 1-16). Titus is urged to teach sound doctrine, such as will suit the practical needs of older and younger Christians, both men and women, and to add to his teaching the force of a good example; he is to speak plainly to slaves of their duties, and to keep alive in his flock the sense of their distinctness from the unregenerate world, and their hope of the Lord's return: like Timothy, he is to see that his authority is not disparaged (ii, 1-15). He is to take care that the Church is kept above reproach in respect of its attitude to the civil power, since the distinctive response of the Christian to God's grace is a wise, disciplined and gentle life. But the controversial spirit which the false teachers encourage does no good to anyone, and must be met by definite acts of discipline,

leading in the last resort, to the excommunication of the obstinate (iii, 1-11).

Here, again, there are one or two allusions of interest, though the warmth and loftiness of some passages in I Timothy is never reached in this letter. Where the writer is, he does not say: but he intends to winter at Nicopolis on the coast of Epirus, and asks Timothy to come to him there, as soon as a substitute in the person of Artemas or Tychicus can be sent to Crete; and he gives instructions that two travelling Christians, Zenas the lawyer and Apollos, —one of these names is already familiar to us,—shall have all due attention (iii, 12-14).

II Timothy is distinguished from the other two letters of the group by the fact that it does definitely tell us that its writer is a prisoner, suffering for Christ's sake, and that he has now no longer any hope of liberation except through martyrdom; the time of his departure has come (i, 8, 12; iv, 6ff). It contains, as it stands, two allusions to an earlier stage of his captivity. The first is the message about the household of Onesiphorus the Ephesian; the master of that house had recently died, it would seem, and St. Paul prays both for him and for those whom his death had bereaved, recalling how much help he had given to the life of the Ephesian Church, and also his goodness to the captive Apostle in Rome: "he oft refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chain; but when he was in Rome he sought me diligently and found me (i, 16ff)." The second of these allusions is at the end of the letter: "at my first defence no man took my part . . . . but the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, that through me the message was delivered out of the mouth of the lion (iv, 16f)." As it stands, this obviously means that St. Paul's first Roman captivity ended in an acquittal, and that when he writes he is just about to enter upon the crisis of a second imprisonment. We shall have to consider later whether this is a right or probable interpretation.

The letter is also full of other personal touches. There are those which concern Timothy himself: the reference to his early grounding in the Old Testament scriptures, and to the unfeigned faith which is in him and which dwelt first in his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice; to his ordination, and to the gift of God which is in him through the laying on of St. Paul's hands, to memories of days of work and suffering shared with the Apostle, and to all that happened at Antioch, Iconium and Lystra (i, 5f; iii, 10ff). Together with these there are, in each chapter, burning words of encouragement and admonition from the writer to his beloved child.

There are also words of regret and grave concern: the writer has been deserted by "all who are in Asia," and among these, by Phygelus and Hermogenes (i, 15); he is aware that false teaching, like that of Hymenæus and Philetus, who maintain that "the resurrection is already past," is dangerously popular (ii, 17f). These allusions are very obscure. The first of them appears to relate to some acts of disloyalty which occurred before St. Paul left pro-Consular Asia on his first journey to Rome: and the otherwise unknown heretics denounced in the second would seem to have taught, as many later heretics did, that the true and only 'resurrection' is the resurrection of the soul from the death of ignorance.

Further, in the passage which speaks of the 'first defence,' we learn who is with the writer at the time when this passage is penned, and who has left him. Only Luke stays behind: Demas has gone, for reasons of his own, to Thessalonica. Tychicus has been sent to Ephesus, Crescens has gone to Galatia or to Gaul, and Titus to Dalmatia. Recently, it seems, St. Paul has travelled round the North-West corner of Asia Minor, for he has left a cloak (or a book-cover) at Troas, and some books as well. Timothy is bidden to rejoin him soon, and on his way to the Apostle is to bring Mark with him, for there is work to be done which Mark can do particularly well. Timothy is to pick him up somewhere

on his journey from Ephesus to Rome. There is an enemy in Ephesus, Alexander the coppersmith, who has been dangerous in the past, and is likely to be dangerous still; of him Timothy is to beware (iv, 9-15).

The substance of the letter is a summons to fidelity and courage; Timothy must be faithful in holding fast to the 'pattern of sound words' heard from the Apostle, and in using the entrusted gifts of God's grace, and must be brave alike in proclaiming the Gospel and in bearing the hardships which that proclamation involves. The dangers to be apprehended will come in part from within the Church; from the spreading contagion of false teaching, with its unhealthy atmosphere of profitless controversy. To be prepared for these, Timothy must live a life of discipline, and of the positive pursuit of all that is best, meeting contentiousness with forbearance and gentle persuasion, hoping the best from those who oppose him. These bad times, in which evil of all sorts is rampant, and men of perverted character easily pervert others, especially 'silly women,' are after all, only a symptom, shewing that the predicted tribulations of the last days have already begun, and the apparent triumph of evil will be very short lived. Let Timothy therefore stand fast in the old paths, incessantly alert and active, watching for the coming days of apostasy; he must now learn to stand on his own feet, for his master's active work here is over, and his hard-earned reward is near.

Such, in general terms, is the outline of these three letters. We have already said that their vocabulary and style is markedly different from those of the series which closes with Philippians. It has also been argued, and the argument is not without force, that in relation to the teaching and organization of the Church they represent a later stage of development than any which can have been reached in the life-time of the Apostle Paul. I do not propose to discuss this question here, for several reasons. In the first place, it is one which only expert students can profitably

consider, and it therefore lies outside our present scope. Further, it cannot be said that the critical discussion of this problem by experts has led, as yet, to any definite conclusion. Most scholars would probably concur in saying that the general impression which the letters convey is one of a Church life which has reached rather more definiteness of form, order and doctrinal fixity than we find in the earlier letters; and yet there is no single feature in them which points quite clearly to a post-Apostolic origin. The impression comes rather from the atmosphere of the letters, and from an indefinable something in their tone, particularly that of I Timothy and Titus, which is less vivid and first-hand than St. Paul's undoubted utterances are, and more like that of a formal document or Church Order.[1] Such an impression cannot be adequately discussed within our present limits. It is fair, however, to say that whether the impression we have mentioned is well or ill founded, it affords very little ground for referring the letters to any particular date. We do not know how fast the development of Church institutions proceeded in the latter part of the Apostolic age; nor how far it may have moved, in some Churches at least, even in St. Paul's life-time. What we do know is that in any case the letters are a good deal older than any known post-Apostolic document. They were almost certainly familiar to St. Ignatius, about 110 A.D. and probably also to the writer of the Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians in 95 A.D. If, as they stand, and with the exception of genuine fragments incorporated in them, they are not Pauline, they may have been written in either of the two decades which followed his martyrdom.

It will suit our purpose better, then, to confine ourselves to questions which are more definite in their nature, though not less perplexing to the searcher after a definite solution.

What can we infer, let us ask, from the personal and

[1] A fair statement of the case from this point of view will be found in Hastings' Dictionary of the Apostolic Age, Vol. II, Art. *Epistles to Timothy and Titus.*

historical allusions in these letters? We will assume, for the moment, that all three of them are the work of St. Paul himself as they stand. Now we have seen that I Timothy and Titus convey no clear evidence as to their date; they tell us nothing of the Apostle's situation at the time of writing. It is possible, then, that these two letters may have been written considerably before II Timothy. Had St. Paul ever been in Crete before the time when his ship put into Fair Havens, and could he have left Titus there on an earlier journey? Did he ever winter in Nicopolis in those years? Was there a journey from Ephesus to Macedonia in which he could have left Timothy behind as his delegate? We do not know; and we cannot ignore the fact that St. Luke leaves many of St. Paul's journeyings unrecorded. Yet the literary evidence practically compels us to group the three Pastoral Epistles together, as we have seen; and therefore, if they are all genuine, we must make room for them all at the end of St. Paul's life. If this is to be done, we must say that he was twice imprisoned in Rome: that his first imprisonment ended in an acquittal (II Tim. iv, 17), and that after his deliverance 'from the mouth of the lion' he was able to continue the full proclamation of his message to the Gentiles for several years and in many lands. He travelled in Asia Minor and from thence to Greece (I Tim. i, 3); he visited Crete and Epirus, passing a winter in Nicopolis, and very shortly before his final arrest he was again in Greece (II Tim. iv, 20), and in Asia Minor at Miletus and at Troas (*ib.*, 13, 20). According to one tradition, we must allow him to have travelled further still. Clement's Epistle to the Corinthians speaks of him as reaching "the bound of the West" as a herald of the Gospel; and this has been taken to mean that he fulfilled the intention referred to in Romans xv, 24, and carried his message as far as Spain.[1]

[1] This tradition was current in the latter part of the second century, A.D. The Muratorian fragment on the Canon refers to it when speaking of the Acts. St. Luke, it appears to say, only related matters of which he had first-hand knowledge; and that is why he says nothing of the martyrdom of Peter or of St. Paul's journey

We might, of course, attempt to reconstruct the actual journeys which St. Paul must have carried out, during the years which elapsed,—if the Pastoral Epistles are all genuine,—between his acquittal in Rome and his final arrest; but the evidence is really too fragmentary to justify such an attempt, and we cannot in fact say more than that if the evidence is reliable, it indicates a considerable amount of travel in the Ægean and perhaps elsewhere as well; There is, of course, no *inherent* reason why all the journeyings mentioned in the last paragraph should not have taken place; but there are some difficulties about the evidence, and particularly about the close of II Timothy, difficulties which we ought to face before attempting to make up our minds. Let us consider, then, one or two of the problems which the close of II Timothy suggests.

When the letter to Colossæ was written, well on in the first stage of the Roman captivity, St. Paul had with him Timothy, Aristarchus the Thessalonian, Mark, Jesus called Justus, Luke, Demas, and Tychicus who carried the letter and accompanied Onesimus to Colossæ. During the second period of captivity, if II Timothy is an accurate guide, St. Paul's *entourage* had almost entirely changed. Aristarchus had disappeared, and so had Jesus Justus: Mark had apparently gone eastward as he had intended to do (Col. iv, 10), and was now to be heard of somewhere on one of the routes between Ephesus and Rome. Demas, faithful to St. Paul in earlier days, had not held out under the strain of his second arrest, and had betaken himself to Thessalonica; Tychicus, after his journey to Colossæ and other Asiatic cities, had been in Rome during the second

to Spain (*profectionem Pauli ad Spaniam proficiscentis*). Yet this may perhaps be no more than a reminiscence of the passage in Clement, combined with an inference from that in Romans. For myself, I am inclined to think the whole tradition rests on Rom. xv, 24, and never had any other basis. It is very hard to believe that St. Paul could have preached in Spain without leaving any local traditions of his presence and mission-work behind him; especially when we remember that he would certainly have gone to large centres.

imprisonment, but had now gone, or was now going, to Ephesus. Titus, who had not been heard of in Rome in earlier days, had now been there with St. Paul for a time, and so had the otherwise unknown Crescens : but Titus had now gone across the Adriatic, and Crescens to Galatia (or Gaul). Trophimus, whom we remember in connection with St. Paul's last journey to Jerusalem (Acts xx, 4 ; xxi, 29), had apparently intended to travel to Rome with the Apostle, but had been prevented by ill-health ; Erastus (which Erastus, we cannot know) had also been expected to travel with St. Paul, but had not in fact moved from Corinth. St. Paul's company was thus reduced to one : only Luke was with him.

Now there is no reason for doubting that all the personal information given in these verses is accurate, and that somewhere and somehow it has to be fitted into the life of St. Paul. But we cannot fail to notice that if II Timothy iv, 9-21 is all one piece, it does in some ways fit rather awkwardly into the puzzle. The main purpose of this letter is to tell Timothy about the principles upon which his work in Ephesus is to be based. It is rather surprising, then, to find that at the end of it he is bidden to come with all speed to Rome. Further, in iv, 7f. we learn that St. Paul is at the very end of his labours : his martyrdom is certainly expected in the near future,—he is already being ' poured out ' like an offering at the altar, his fight is over and his course is finished. Yet in 11-13, he is expecting to find work for Mark to do as his agent and subordinate, and asks to have a cloak and some books brought to him from a place as distant as Troas. It would seem that he is not so near the end, after all : there is yet time for a message to reach Ephesus, and for Timothy to answer it in person by travelling Romeward ; Timothy is to come before winter, if possible ; that is, before navigation becomes difficult : and it is implied that even if he has to delay his coming till the spring, the journey may still be worth making.

It is also puzzling to find St. Paul telling Timothy all about

the circumstances and result of his first trial. Had St. Paul not been travelling in and about Asia Minor since his acquittal, and must not Timothy have known the whole story long before the second letter was written? We may suppose, perhaps, that Timothy had left for Philippi soon after the writing of the Philippian letter (Phil. ii, 19), and that so he may have been prevented from being with the Apostle during his trial; but it is hard to see how, after all the intercourse which he must have had with St. Paul in Ephesus between the first and second imprisonment, he can have needed to be told about St. Paul's solitary encounter with the 'lion' and the deliverance in which it ended.

Perhaps, then, the pieces of this puzzle do not really fit together as we have been trying to make them do, on the assumption that these three letters are all genuine as they stand. It is not easy to get far beyond that 'perhaps.' But there is a solution of one part of the difficulty which is interesting enough to experiment with. Can it be that the verses iv, 9-18 or 9-21[1] do not really belong to the Roman imprisonment at all, but to an earlier time? It has been conjectured that they may have to do with St. Paul's imprisonment and first trial before Felix in Cæsarea. The reader may care to see for himself how this works out, and what difficulties it involves. Certainly St. Paul had been at Troas, and had left it hurriedly, and on foot, not long before the Cæsarean episode; Timothy accompanied him on that journey "as far as Asia" (Acts xx, 4), but not, apparently, as far as Jerusalem; so that the episode of the cloak and the books would fit in well enough at this point, and Timothy would probably remember (as is implied in II Tim. iv, 13) that they had been left behind. It is conceivable, too, that Tychicus may have been sent to Ephesus

[1] It is *possible* that v. 19-21 do not belong to the same letter as v. 9-18; and if we are forced to think that the personal parts of II Timothy were pieced together from scraps of Pauline correspondence, we have no means of discovering where each scrap began and ended.

at that time, although, if Timothy was in Ephesus himself, and had indeed gone there about the same time as Tychicus, it is rather odd that he should be told of this. 'Alexander the coppersmith' may perhaps be the same as that Alexander of Acts xix, 33, the spokesman of the Jews, whom the Ephesian mob howled down; and, if so, it is quite possible that he may have carried on his opposition to the Christian cause both before and after the riot in the theatre. Nor is there anything in what is said about the 'first defence' which would not be appropriate enough in connection with the hearing before Felix; and the failure of St. Paul's enemies then, although it led to no liberation, may well have seemed to be the prelude to a fuller and wider accomplishment of his missionary purposes.

It must be admitted that this transference of II Timothy iv, 9-21, from the Roman to the Cæsarean imprisonment is a very ingenious 'skeleton key,' which very nearly fits a rather difficult lock. True, it requires us to suppose that Demas, after abandoning St. Paul for selfish reasons at Cæsarea, returned to his allegiance later on, and rejoined the Apostle in Rome: but who can say that this is impossible? On the other hand, I cannot believe that the *whole* passage will bear transplanting; for verse 20 contains a statement about Trophimus which cannot possibly be filled into the framework of Acts xx-xxi. The narrative of Acts clearly means to tell us, on the authority of an eye-witness, that on St. Paul's last journey to Jerusalem, Trophimus went with him, and went about Jerusalem in his company. The statement that the Asiatic Jews, who attacked St. Paul in the temple, had previously seen Trophimus with him in the city, cannot really bear any other meaning than this. But II Timothy iv, 20, says: "Trophimus I left sick at Miletus." We cannot imagine that St. Paul would have written from Cæsarea to tell Timothy this, if in fact Trophimus either went on with him to Jerusalem, or rejoined him in Jerusalem after an interval. The

'skeleton key' will not work at all unless verses 19-21 are separated from 9-18.

We are thus left, in respect of St. Paul's last days and the documents which appear to refer to them, with a bundle of unsolved doubts and unanswered questions. At some time in Nero's reign, there is every reason to believe, he was beheaded as a martyr near Tre Fontane on the Ostian way; but over all that had befallen him since the time when the narrative of Acts closes there hangs a cloud of obscurity. Only here and there, in the Pastoral Epistles, do we feel convinced beyond the possibility of doubt that we are listening to the voice which dictated the earlier letters. It may well be that criticism and discovery will in the end provide us—or those who come after us—with a completely satisfying solution of the literary and historical problems of the letters to Timothy and Titus; at present, however, no explanation has been found which any reasonable student can accept as final.

CHRONOLOGY OF ST. PAUL'S LETTERS.

[THIS list is based on Professor C. H. Turner's article, *Chronology of the New Testament*, in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. I, and aims only at shewing how the order suggested for the Epistles in the foregoing chapters falls into the chronological framework constructed in that article.

It may be added that the pro-consulship of Gallio in Achaia is now determined, on the evidence of an inscription at Delphi, as belonging to the years 50-51 A.D.]

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